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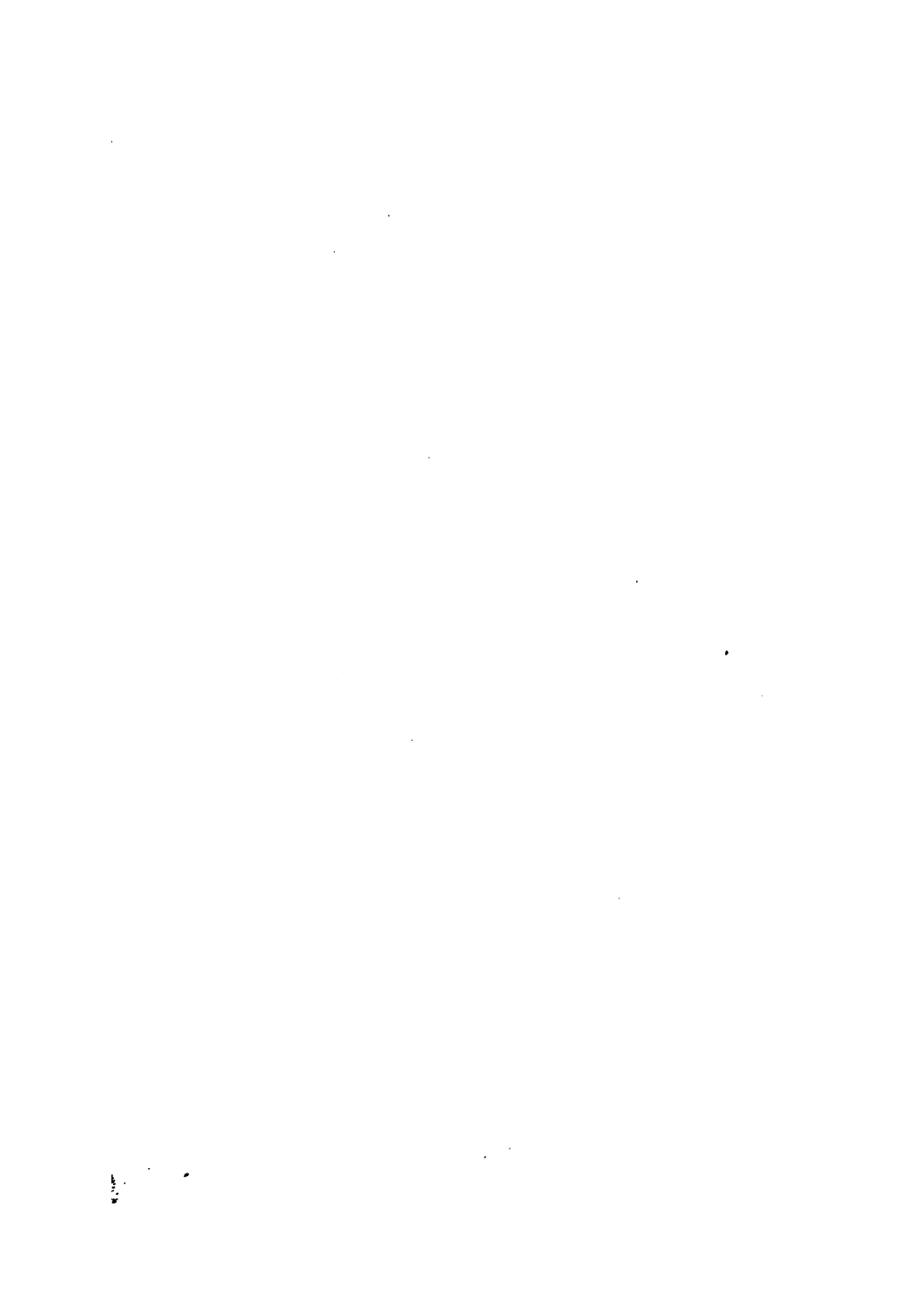
THE LORD'S PRAYER



C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D.







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# THE LORD'S PRAYER

By C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D.

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## I.

‘OUR FATHER, WHICH ART IN HEAVEN.’

Matt. vi. 9.

‘THE Lord’s Prayer.’ Think of it first as such. The Master’s Prayer. He whose we are, once, twice, and thrice over—who owns because He created, who owns because He redeemed, who owns because He is recreating, who owns because He has a heaven for us, and a life after death, to which the present life is but the porch or the antechamber—composed this prayer, uttered it on earth, caused it to be written as a part of His Gospel, and left it, like His holy Sacrament, as a thing to be treasured and used in remembrance of Him. In this way

it has come to be what no other form of words ever can be to the Churches. It was given in direct answer to that which has been the cry of hearts in all time, 'Lord, teach us to pray.' This form of words was the answer. 'When ye pray, say.' 'After this manner pray ye.'

In using this prayer, we are exercising our Christian unity in a way about which there can be no mistake. There are ideas of unity, which never can be realized while man is man. There will always be diversities of form, which are of no consequence. There will always be differences of mind and thought, inside the same form—fatal, some of them, to the reality of unity. But they who can pray together the Lord's Prayer, in spirit and in truth, must be substantially at one. The Church of all space and of all time meets, and is one, in the Master's Prayer. It is itself a sacra-

ment of holy communion. The aspirations of eighteen centuries have gone up to God in it.

It is also the everlasting warrant for prayer itself. The Master said, 'Pray.' Men may argue against the efficacy of prayer, may put a thousand difficult cases, and ask, 'How can prayer be of any use in this circumstance and that? how can prayer arrest the march of consequence, or stay the course of law, moral or natural?' We say in reply, The Lord of earth and heaven, *who must know*, takes prayer for granted—saying, 'When ye pray'—and not only condescends to it as an instinct of conscious weakness, but actually bids us to pray, and gives us a prayer.

In this most elementary form of our subject, we see its significance. We have announced 'The Lord's Prayer' as the subject of discourse and meditation this Lent. It is the object of



every Sermon and to every Service to bring men into communion with God. The spiritual life has no meaning and no existence except as that thing of which prayer is the exercise and the enjoyment. Therefore we are here at the very fountain of living water, and have but to ask the blessing of Almighty God upon the drawing and upon the drinking.

We will not spend much time upon preliminaries to our subject, however interesting. A word or two must suffice.

(1) We have two forms of the Lord's Prayer—one given in this sixth chapter of St. Matthew, and the other in the eleventh chapter of St. Luke. They are not precisely the same, even as they stand in our Version. But we live in critical days—and the careful study of Manuscripts, Versions, and Fathers, has led to

a yet further discovery of differences between St. Matthew's form and St. Luke's. One early Greek Father, Origen—and one early Latin Father, Augustine—expressly say that St. Luke omits the third petition, 'Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,' and shortens the sixth by the omission of the latter clause, 'But deliver us from evil'—giving reasons, in each case, for the variety. Yes, my brethren, the Word of God, like His air, like His light, like His sea, like His Providence, like His Spirit, is very free—it is not a letter, but a spirit—it never repeats itself—it is not printed, not stereotyped—on, it is a voice—a voice, even after it is written—and variety is its characteristic. The Name and the Kingdom imply, contain in themselves, the Will—if that clause of the Prayer be omitted, the substance of it survives in the other two : and if

the express prayer for 'deliverance from evil,' or 'from the evil one,' is not added in St. Luke, yet the mention of 'temptation' involves it, and the petition against temptation includes it.

If we allude here to such questions, be assured it is with a practical purpose. We would caution ourselves against a servile treatment, even of the Lord's Prayer. If the Evangelists, if their Lord, had designed this Prayer for what later ages turned it into, a charm and a 'Pater Noster,' no doubt there would have been no such varieties in its representation. And if the early, the Apostolical, Church had so used it, no doubt the variety of transcription would have had no room and no existence. Surely we may read here the correction of an error which has been the plague and pest of the Church of later times—the idolatry of the letter—not least in refer-

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ence to the sacred Book, and to the one formula of worship which that Book enshrines.

(2) Another interesting question, meeting us on the threshold, touches the occasion, or occasions, on which the Lord's Prayer was given. St. Matthew places it in the Sermon on the Mount. St. Luke records it as the answer of our Lord on some occasion of His praying in the sight of His disciples; who, when He ceases, beg of Him some instruction about praying, such as may enable them to exercise the duty with something of His power, fervour, and enjoyment. There are persons who imagine St. Luke to give us the real account, and St. Matthew's place of the Prayer to be inexact. It would be easier to accept this—which, after all, makes it but a question of arrangement—if the two accounts of the Prayer, St. Luke's and

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St. Matthew's, had been precisely the same. As it is, in the absence of all proof, with no guide but conjecture, it may seem not only safer and more reverent, but also more consistent and reasonable, to suppose that the Prayer itself was twice communicated—once in the midst of warnings and cautions respecting the exercise of devotion generally, and once (in a somewhat briefer form) in answer to the express request of the disciples, 'Lord, teach us to pray.'

(3) One word should be added as to the deeply interesting question, whether the Lord's Prayer is, in each separate particular, an original document. Diligent search has been made, amongst the recorded sayings of the Rabbis, and some expressions have been found, as to God's 'name' and God's 'kingdom' which might seem to anticipate the introduction of

those topics into the great Christian Prayer. Brethren! what of this? Where, in our Lord Jesus Christ, is there any repudiation of existing good? With what satisfaction, with what joy, would He have found one scrap of God's truth in the 'doctors' amongst whom he sate, at twelve years old, in God's Temple! 'Far, far was the Lord,' Grotius says, 'from all affectation of an unnecessary novelty.' Gladly would He have incorporated, could He but find it, one petition of the Synagogue into a Prayer designed for the Universal Church. But it is far more true, and more satisfactory, to remind ourselves that these Rabbis were themselves students and teachers of the Old Testament, and that they could not read Exodus without finding God's 'name,' nor Daniel without finding God's 'kingdom,' and that our Lord Jesus Christ was

not to close Exodus or close Daniel because others, His creatures, had read them before Him. Away with the childish cavil, that He, the Everlasting and the All-true, was to sit at the feet of Rabbi Eliezer or Rabbi Gamaliel to learn the use of Scriptures which His own Spirit had written down for His Church of the Old Testament or for His Church of the New!

The whole force of the Lord's Prayer lies in its combination and in its unity. The two great commandments, the love of God, and the love of Man, lay embedded in the Mosaic Scriptures. None the less was it Christ's work, a work as much of originality as of authority, to draw out those two precepts and make them the whole of Christian doctrine. Even so the Lord's Prayer loses nothing of its creative originality by being brought into being out of elements pre-existing.

The wants of fallen men are the wants of all time: the Word of God is one in all time, and its grandeur lies in its world-wide and time-long applicability.

(4) 'After this manner therefore pray ye.'  
'When ye pray, say.'

Read here, then, the warrant for, and the specimen of, a liturgy. Christ prohibits not other forms. He forbids not to pray without forms. All that is from the heart is audible, is acceptable, is welcome, in heaven. But unquestionably He silences here the silly tradition that nothing can be prayer but that which is extemporaneous and sudden. Unquestionably the principle of a form is here—not of form without spirit, yet of spirit embodied, incarnate, incorporate in form. Neither with regard to prayers nor to sermons does the question lie



between written and unwritten, but between formal and spiritual, between an utterance real and an utterance unreal, to the speaker and to the worshipper. 'After this manner'—not necessarily or always in these words. 'After this manner'—thus fully, thus concisely—thus gravely, thus earnestly—thus in sense and in spirit—better if thus even in order and method.

OUR FATHER, WHICH ART IN HEAVEN.

We have here, first, a revelation.

'Israel after the flesh' was taught, indeed, a national sonship. 'Doubtless Thou art our Father.' 'Am not I thy Father which begat thee?'

Brethren! we are taught to mistrust, as a ground of personal access, anything which is not personal. To speak of 'the redemption

of the world' is indeed right and true and substantial. It is in the universal that the individual finds its standing-place and its starting-point. Any limitation is fatal to the trust. Any condition, introduced at that point, bars the entrance. Yet the force and the fire of the universal lies in the personal. The logic is perfect—If of all, then of me—draw the inference! 'Loved us'—then 'loved me.' And from the individual we go back strongly and irrefragably to the universal. If 'Our Father,' then 'My Father'—if mine, then ours.

In this one word lies revelation—lies the Gospel. Jesus Christ stands upon the earth, and declares God a Father.

Great grace is in the word. First of all, it supersedes all human will and human action as regards the relationship. If our Lord Jesus

Christ had said, 'When ye pray, say, Our Friend,' ten thousand doubts would have sprung up and checked the utterance. A Friend implies the concurrence of two wills. We may speak of a family friend, an hereditary friend, and we may feel that in that name there is involved something of a claim prior to merit, independent of character, offering security for kind construction and for long patience. Still, at some point or other, in the relation of friendship, there has been a concurrence, a joint action, of two wills—friendship cannot always have been all on one side—and herein lies the difference between Friend and Father.

No exercise of will can procure for me, and no amount of demerit can forfeit for me, the fact, the existence, of a sonship and a Fatherhood. Even in the far country, where the prodigal son

is feeding swine, not memory alone, but consciousness, recognizes a relationship between himself and a far-off person, whom he confidently calls his father. And when he forms the resolution to escape from his misery and his destitution, and to seek' again the land and the home which for years have been to him but a dream and an illusion, he frames into words, without a doubt or a peradventure, the confession with which he will present himself at the door of that house and that heart, and it begins with the assertion of an inalienable relationship — 'I will say to him, Father !'

We press this thought again and again, because we feel that in it lies, not only the one hope, but the one possibility, of fallen humanity. Human teachers may say, Repent, and believe, and amend—and then, perhaps, God may

receive you—then, perhaps, in the course of years, you may be forgiven—then, perhaps, when death comes, you need not despair. Christ says, When ye pray—when ye first begin to pray—when the thought first comes to you, I am not happy, I am not at peace, I am far from home—say, at once, without waiting for fitness, without raising the question of a satisfactory repentance, without investigating your ‘evidences,’ whether of Christian faith or godly sorrow—begin by saying, ‘Father’—begin by going straight home, and, when you have done so, unbosom yourself instantly as to One who already loves you, and to whom you owe, twice and thrice over, your being.

I read no restriction, here, upon the use of this Prayer. It is true, it is framed on the supposition that Christ has redeemed, has bought us

back, by His blood, into a sonship forfeited by sin. I do not say that the Lord's Prayer is for those who reject or repudiate Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Whosoever uses it must use it at least as His—and then, surely, 'he that is not against us is for us.' I do not believe that there is one person here present, who may not honestly and acceptably kneel down and call God his Father. The Lord's Prayer is the prayer of fallen, ignorant, sinful Humanity—use it earnestly, and there shall be an answer. In using it, you will learn, and you will grow. Nay, if you stopped with those two words, 'Our Father'—and perhaps they are all that the child, all that the poor, all that the common worshipper, really understands of the Lord's Prayer—you would have done the chief part of prayer—you would have stepped across the barrier—you

would have seen God—you would have put your life into God's life—you would have felt the meaning of it—you would have seen it all as a plan and as a discipline—you would have become reconciled to your place and to your lot—you would have realized a new relationship, of which 'the nature and the name is Love.'

And when faith has said, 'Father,' then love steps in, and adds, 'Our.' There is no selfishness, no isolation, no exclusiveness, in that sonship. He who revealed the sonship revealed also the brotherhood. And so the prayer becomes an intercession too. Is not that the very idea of intercession? Some of us are burdened with many wants and many sorrows which are not our own. And we find it difficult to pray them. We find self busy even in our prayers—and

when self is satisfied, prayer ends. We imagine some separate chapter of intercession—and we never reach it. But Christ says, Bear others upon your heart all through—pray for yourself and them in one—say, ‘Our Father,’ and prayer is intercession at once. Take your friend with you, take your pastor, take your Church, take your people—yea, take your enemy too and your slanderer—in recollection and in intention, and kneel with them, as one, in your own prayer and in your own confession. So, at the very spring and fountain-head of your life, you will have cast in the salubrious tree which shall make every Marah of your converse sweetness. He for whom you have prayed in your own prayer cannot be your enemy—you must rejoice in his welfare, not in his undoing—for is not his



Father yours, and did you not pray for him in yourself?

Finally, 'which art in heaven.' 'In the heavens.'

With what purpose are these words added to the definition of God? Is it to mark distance and contrast? Is it to enforce reverence—to say, Remember the vastness, the purity, the calm of that sky; and there think of God—away from earth's littleness, and earth's defilement, and earth's din? 'He is in heaven, and thou upon earth—let thy words be few?'

Some of these are true thoughts, beautiful and Scriptural—they ought to be in us when we pray.

Yet surely the thought is something distinct and different from any of these.

'Heaven' is the opposite, the correlative, of earth. It is God's presence; and that presence

cannot be one of intermixture or confusion with the creature.

But the place of the words here teaches us that that heaven, which is essentially inaccessible and unapproachable to the created, is, in Christ, brought down to earth. Not only is our Father there, but we can speak to Him as there, and yet be audible. 'He whose are the heavens is our Father : high and wide as heaven is, so is His presence—yet the heaven opens to all who know God as their Father. In Christ they have access: in Christ He draws nigh to them as they speak, and answers.'

Brethren! we meet on one of the most solemn, most sorrowful days of the year—meet to make mention of sin, and to humble ourselves before God in the recollection. And the subject

of discourse might seem incongruous with the day, if that sharp division were just, which some make, between fasts and feasts.

We have learned to judge somewhat differently. We do not believe in any sense of sin which lies out of sight of Christ. We believe that in the recollection of the Father, loving before we love, redeeming before we turn, hearing (as the Prophet expresses it) before we speak, and before we call answering, is contained not only the one happiness, but the one penitence, which is worth the name. It is when we know the Father that we feel our undutifulness : it is when we lie before the mercy-seat that we first see ourselves without excuse.

Therefore we shall endeavour, this Lent, to lay that solid foundation for true repentance, which is the knowledge of God in Jesus our

Lord, as a God near, and present, and loving—  
already our Father—forgiving iniquity, trans-  
gression, and sin, in a Saviour who has made  
reconciliation, and brought in everlasting right-  
eousness.



## II.

‘HALLOWED BE THY NAME.’

Matt. vi. 9.

THE Lord's Prayer the only liturgy of Divine Inspiration—the Lord's Prayer the point of union for all lands and for all ages, for all Christians and for all the Churches—the Lord's Prayer the Divine warrant for prayer itself; the Christian's answer to all such as would raise infidel objections to the idea of prayer, as superfluous, as presumptuous, as inconsistent with invariable laws of cause and consequence, of Divine action and human suffering—these topics have been briefly touched upon. The Lord's Prayer, in its two forms and two occasions of

utterance, a witness to the freedom of the Word and the versatility of the Spirit—the Lord's Prayer, in its order and combination, an original document, in the only sense in which originality is a mark of Divinity—the Lord's Prayer a Revelation, in reference to the Object of all Prayer, and the birthright of the creature, universally redeemed, to the relation of sonship and the privilege of worship—the Lord's Prayer the Divine correction of selfishness—the Lord's Prayer, finally, the opening of direct communication between earth and heaven—these points also were noticed, on the first Day of Lent, in connection with the address which prefaces and motives the whole—'Our Father, which art in heaven.'

We are to proceed to-night with the petitions. They are clearly six, not seven, in number: three, of which the key-note is 'Thy'

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—and three, of which the key-note is ‘Our.’ God stands first, and self is nowhere. In these two particulars, the Lord’s Prayer is unique. When man kneels to pray, he begins with self, and he ends with it. Confession, petition, thanksgiving, these three—sometimes no confession, sometimes no thanksgiving—but at most these three—contain and complete his worship. Even the possession of the Lord’s Prayer has not counteracted this primary instinct, this original sin, of the fallen.

Brethren, we all know and feel the difficulty of praying. It is the complaint, it is the misery, ‘yea, of such as are regenerate.’ Did not the Saviour contemplate, did He not mercifully minister to, this distress of His people, in the very form which He gave to ‘teach them to pray?’



(1) First, He said this. 'When ye pray, say, Our Father.' Say it, whosoever and whatsoever ye be. Say it, not because you are good, not because you are obedient, dutiful, or even believing, but almost for the opposite reason—because you have nothing, and are nothing, and must fall back upon God alone for your hope and for your plea. No man can give himself a father—and no man, not even if he be an exile, an outcast, and an outlaw, can ever cancel or forfeit his parentage. This is a relation prior to action, prior to volition, prior therefore to merit and demerit—a fact for all time; a substantial reality over which change and sin can have no power. God the Creator, God the Redeemer, God the Comforter, is 'Our Father' whether we will or no: and when, in the far country of our want and of our ruin, we speak, ever so doubt-

fully, of a return and a supplication, we cannot help calling Him by that Name—if we used any other, it would be a fabrication and a lie—‘ I will arise and go to my Father.’

We appeal to your consciences, we lay bare our own, when we give this as half the occupation of many men’s religion—of many men’s prayer, if prayer it can be called—the endeavour to settle their relationship to God ; the perpetual to and fro of a restless disquieted spirit, as to its right to address God at all, and, if at all, then in what character and in what relation. Thus we lash ourselves with vain scourges of mistrust and self-tormenting ; and we rise again with the riddle unsolved, or with a peradventure of hope and salvation drawn rather from the shifting fitful feeling, than from the one unvarying Word of Him that cannot lie.

O that we would pray the Lord's Prayer!  
There that question is settled once for all.  
'When ye pray, say.' Yes, thou, the confident,  
too confident, Simon Barjona—and thou, the  
diffident, too diffident, Thomas called Didymus—  
and thou, who shall gainsay it? the traitor that  
shalt be, Judas—when ye pray, say, 'Our Father.'  
The difficulty is not here. God is your Father,  
and 'He dealeth with you as with sons.' If you  
will not have Him—if you will flee away, and feed  
swine—it must be so. But lash not yourselves  
with idle fears as to the sonship and the Father-  
hood—lie not there, ye who would give your all  
to be sons, grovelling in the mire of a self-made  
self-imagined serfdom and villenage—that is not  
the question, whether ye are sons—but only  
whether, being sons, ye will have Him and own  
and love Him as a Father.

The revelation of the universal Father is thus the first step—we all feel it so—towards prayer.

(2) But then begin other difficulties.

I can scarcely call them so, in comparison with that first. For, when once there has settled itself in the soul the thought, 'God is my Father,' it seems natural that we should be on His side—natural that we should take interest in His will, His work, and His glory.

And so Christ bids us, in the second place, when we pray, to begin with God.

That which might seem to put prayer further from us does just the contrary.

O, if one of us could honestly say, '*I* do not signify—I, a very insignificant, very worthless, very sinful being—I, who am but of yesterday, and to-morrow shall not be—it matters not what I have or lack, what I enjoy or suffer, for

this little moment of time, on this little atom of space—but it is all-important that the great God should be honoured and obeyed and glorified—it is all-important that the blessed Saviour should spread far and wide His wonderful Gospel, His universal reign—it is all-important that the Holy and Blessed Spirit should take up His abode in sorrowful disconsolate sin-possessed hearts, bringing order out of chaos, and heaven out of hell—and therefore, disregarding myself, I will put God first, in all my thoughts, and in all my supplications'—I say, not only, what a grand life would this make out of our littleness and our pauperism—but, which is the point now in our view, what ease, what freedom, what sweetness, would this spirit breathe at once into our prayers! O, if I could really feel that the only thing worth

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praying about is God Himself—that I might safely forget myself in His Name, His Kingdom, His Will—there would be an assurance, a grandeur, an elevation, in my prayers, such as would supersede doubt and guarantee acceptance. If I could only make ‘God’s kingdom and righteousness’ (in this sense) my object, I should be quite sure then that ‘all other things would be added unto me.’

(3) Once again: He who bade us to place God first in our Prayer, directed us also to put self nowhere. ‘Thine,’ and ‘Ours,’ these two—‘mine,’ ‘myself,’ nowhere.

Is this hard? Does this breathe indifference to the comfort and happiness of the praying? O not so!

Rather does it say this to us. You might scruple to ask great things (even spiritually) for

yourself. You might find voice and speech checked by the remembrance of sins many and great, if you were about to beg of God, whom you have despised and defied, times without number, blessings of earth and heaven such as belong only to His chosen ones. But, instead of this, ask for His Church, ask for His people, ask for His creatures, that which He sees to be needful for them. Lose yourself in that multitude. Be willing, be thankful, to share with all others those marvellous gifts, which He, the universal Father, gives so bountifully, and spares not. You can pray then. You can pray for the Church; you can pray for the world, and let yourself be but a speck and an atom in that ocean, in that universe, of recipients. One shall not lose, for another's having—'He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.'

In these three particulars is the Divinity of the Lord's Prayer most clearly seen. Blessed is he that hears in his heart the '*Cum oratis, dicite*'—

HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

This is no doxology. It is a prayer. It is the first of three prayers concerning God himself.

What is a 'name?' What is it for us? A name is the brief summary of a person. I do not mean that a name, as some have dreamed, can express the qualities, or the chief quality, of a complex human character. But I mean that the use of a name, the object of each man having a name, is, to supersede the necessity of interminable descriptions, and to set before us, by a sort of telegraphic despatch, the whole person—face, form, and properties—of him



whom we know and of whom we would make mention. The 'name' is the catchword which renders amplification needless, by bringing up to us the person—figure, and qualities, and characteristics, in one. The name is the man. The absent, distant, inaccessible man is made present to us in the naming of the name.

Even thus is it—with reverence be it spoken—with the Name of God.

When Moses prayed, 'I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory'—and when he was told that to see the Face of God was impossible, but that he might be privileged to behold some sort of back-look and (as it were) retrospect of His Person—we read next that the Lord descended, passed by before him, and, in answer to that prayer for a sight of His glory, 'proclaimed the Name of the Lord.' Now what was that Name? Was it the

‘Jehovah,’ the ‘I Am,’ of the original revelation? Read it as it lies there at length in the 34th chapter of the Book of Exodus, and you will see that the Name of God is, in other words, the sum of God’s attributes, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, keeping mercy for thousands, and that will by no means clear the guilty.’ God, such as He is, in mercy and righteousness, in boundless compassion and just judgment—that, that is His ‘Name.’

Accordingly, you will find in many passages of the Old Testament the Name put as the equivalent of the Person. ‘The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble : the Name of the God of Jacob defend thee.’ ‘Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.’ Sometimes ‘the Name’ stands alone in the

original Hebrew, where the English Version has added 'of the Lord.' 'He that blasphemeth the Name'—the great Name—'shall be put to death.'

There is this, always, in the 'Name' of God—that it precludes the false, the erroneous or idolatrous, conception of Him. The Name of God is always the real, the true, the revealed God, as opposed to all man's ideas and man's imaginations concerning Him.

'Thy Name,' therefore, in the Lord's Prayer is, in other words, 'Thou, such as Thou art'—'Thou, Father, as revealed in Thy Word and in Thy works; in Thy Son, and in Thy Spirit.'

To 'hallow' is to make holy. It is to set God's mark, the mark of His ownership and of His consecration, upon a thing, or upon a person—upon a day, or upon a building, or upon

a mountain—upon a portion of time, or a piece of matter—or else upon a particular man, or a particular family, or a particular nation—according to the subject, and according to the context, in each case. Instances of each of these uses will readily occur to students of the Bible.

But none of these applications of the word are suitable here. We cannot, in these senses, hallow that which is holy—still less, Him, whose ownership it is that hallows all else that is holy. There is, therefore, another recognized sense of the word in Scripture: and it is that of regarding, treating, dealing with, as holy. It is said, more than once, to Moses and Aaron, in reference to their failure in a particular act of obedience, ‘Because ye believed me not, to sanctify (hallow) me in the eyes of the children of Israel.’ They had failed to recognize God, to

deal with God, as that Holy God which He is. They had led the people to think that He might be disobeyed, might be trifled with, might be lightly regarded and imperfectly served, and no harm come of it. This was not 'hallowing His Name.' The contrast instructs us in the interpretation.

When we pray, 'Hallowed be Thy name,' we pray that God, the true God, may be regarded by us and by all men—regarded, remembered, and therefore dealt with—as that Holy God which He is. That we and all men—let me rather say, that, without thinking of ourselves, all men—all God's creatures everywhere—may reverence Him as He ought to be revered. That all unworthy conceptions, and all irreverent thoughts of Him, may be done away with throughout His universe, and that He may be

known, and worshipped, and revered, by all that He has made, according to His nature and according to His self-revelation.

Some man will say, 'This is difficult, this is abstruse, this is high above me. Such a Prayer as this seems to be ill-adapted to human want and to human capacity such as we see and feel either.' To this thought—common, natural, and often recurring—I will devote a few concluding words.

We have here a specimen of our Lord's teaching. We have also a specimen of God's dealing. It is no part of either to do away with mystery. No part of Revelation is so mysterious as every part of Providence. We are in a world of mystery. Enough for practical purposes—it is an old but an ever new argument—if the mysteries of the Bible and the Gospel correspond

to and tally with the mysteries of nature and human life. If Christ gives us a Prayer, we must expect that it will have depths in it below our fathoming.

(1) But nothing is more remarkable than this, both in the Lord's Prayer and in the Bible—I might add, and in God's Providential dealing also—that, if there is much that the wisest and most experienced cannot explain, there is always something of which the words might have been written, 'Thou hast revealed them unto babes.' It is so here. There are those, doubtless, and they are many, who use the petition, 'Hallowed be Thy Name,' simply as a prayer against taking in vain, in common speech, the actual name of God Himself. They say this prayer, as they say the response to the third Commandment, 'Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline

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our hearts to keep this law'—understanding it as a request for grace to avoid a profane use of the Holy Name. Thus has Christ provided for the wants of His ruder and more ignorant people. There are those, in all times, who are in danger of actual profaneness of speech.

(2) And indeed, brethren, it is but a step, from this most elementary use of the petition before us, to one most necessary for us all. When we think of our Lord's words about oaths, extending to all manner of subjects that which slaves of the 'letter' restricted to the sacred Name itself; when we remember how He teaches us the connection of God with everything—with earth and heaven, with cities and buildings, nay, with the body of man himself—so that no place or substance is out of the reach



of His presence and His consecration ; we must see how wide, how all-pervading, is the risk of profaneness in our speech—how constantly we are all taking in vain names really holy—how, not only in allusions, veiled or unveiled, to the holy records of Revelation, but even in discussing earthly business and human character, in passing sentence upon books and sermons, in censuring actions or ridiculing follies, in laying positive plans (without God) of journeys or amusements, in the mere discussion of details of arrangement and employment, we are in peril, every one of us, every day and every hour, of desecrating, instead of hallowing, the very Name of God—what need, therefore, we have, of this Divine Prayer for reverence, were it but to protect us from what God counts profanity, not more in open words of levity or uncharity, than

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in the tendency to call 'common' that which God has consecrated.

(3) But how much more still when we carry the self-examination into that region in which God most of all meets us in person—those 'thoughts and intents of the heart' which He warns us that He discerns and must judge.

'Hallowed be Thy Name' has here a whole district and province of application, in reference to our habitual tone and temper, in secret and solitude, towards Revelation and towards God. The Greek word for 'ungodly' is borrowed from the want of 'revering'—from the absence of a spirit of reverence in the heart and in the life. Into how few men's thoughts does God enter at all, as a real Existence and a conscious Presence! Where is the life—the soul's life, I mean now—which is indeed and in truth lived as in the

sight of God? To whom is it natural—I speak of the new nature—to refer to God all the purposes and all the interests of this being, which is His once, twice, and thrice, in each of us? Who is there who sets God always before Him, and never evades or eludes, in desire at least, the watchful Guardian, the loving yet Most Holy Friend? Who, even in his thoughts of God, is always grave, always earnest, always reverent—counting himself responsible, in his measure, alike for his own conceptions of Him, and for the impressions made by him upon another? All of us have a portion, small but real, of God's own honour confided to us—it becomes us so to think of Him, and so to speak, as that men, taking knowledge of us, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Shall we then go forth to pray this prayer with more earnestness and with more understanding—‘Hallowed be Thy Name?’ Thou who hast caused Thy glory to pass before us, in Thy Son Jesus Christ, who is the brightness of Thy glory and the express image of Thy person—Thou, who hast caused Thy Holy Word to be written for our learning, that we might know Thee as Thou art, and walk ever in the light of Thy countenance—grant, we pray Thee, that we may ever remember Thee, and honour Thee, and reverence Thee, in Thy truth and in Thy grace, and bring others, by our influence and our example, to seek Thee and to follow Thee likewise. And O grant that not here only, or there, but throughout the universe of Thy creation, Thy name may be known and Thy glory manifested, so that

the prophetic word may at last have its accomplishment—

‘The Lord shall be King over all the earth :  
in that day shall there be one Lord, and His  
Name one!’

### III.

‘THY KINGDOM COME.’

Matt. vi. 10.

THREE words. Weighty, instructive, monitory words. Characteristic of the Prayer—characteristic also of the Author. (1) The first lifts the thoughts upward. Reminds us of the presence, of the relationship, of the name. Corrects the selfishness which spoils and drags downward the prayer even of the regenerate. Bids us think of God, and lose ourselves in Him. (2) The second reminds us of a great system, a magnificent organization, as of some vast Empire of lives and souls, of ages and universes, of eternities and infinities, high above us, deep

beneath us, before us and behind, in which we are nothing, yet which is everything to us, in which to have a place is glory, for which to be allowed to pray is the highest honour and the highest dignity of the creature. (3) The third bids us exercise this honour, this dignity, at once. Here, as we kneel, as we utter the petition in Church, or house, or chamber, we are doing an act which implies a Divine worship, we are putting the hand to a work which is all God's, we are claiming a franchise, and a citizenship, and a priesthood, not of earth, but of heaven.

THY—KINGDOM—COME.

We will not dissect or analyse where it is all-important that we should combine and concentrate. We will try to imbue our minds with this

idea, this conception, this Divine revelation—  
God has a Kingdom.

Scripture is full of it. We find it most prominent at two epochs of the Old Dispensation. (1) One of these is the reign of David. Not only did that reign stamp itself very forcibly upon the heart and imagination of the chosen people. Not only did it form the ideal, from which and to which all that was most vigorous and all that was most devout, in poetry and prophecy, in saint and sage, worked and taught, sang and worshipped—so that the very name of David became not more a memory than an expectation—not more a cherished heirloom than an inspired promise and an immortal hope. Far more than this. No believer in the presence of God's Hand and God's Word in the Old Testament can doubt that the King David of the



theocracy was in a very real sense the type of Christ; that God was showing in him what Christ should be when He came, alike in the manifoldness of His experience, the universality of His sympathy, and the spirituality of His character. We have nothing to do here with the faults and sins which made King David the very opposite, in one aspect, to the Holy and Blessed Saviour and Redeemer of fallen man. Mysterious as that aspect confessedly is, open as it is to the taunts and cavils of the enemy and the blaphemer, it does but heighten the contrast between the Divine and the human, without destroying the correspondence in its essential feature between the Antitype and the type. It pleased God to make this one of the most real, most characteristic, offices of Him that should come—that He should be ‘a King upon His

throne.' (2) The other great epoch of prominence for the 'kingdom' under the Old Testament Dispensation was the period of the Captivity at Babylon. On the one hand, it was a time of despair for the royalty of Israel; on the other, it was a time of overwhelming, of crushing impressiveness for the idea of royalty itself. The Jews at Babylon lay prostrate before a world-empire, which not only overshadowed, but seemed absolutely to grind to powder, every reminiscence and every prospect of a royalty of their own. It was then—it was in the face and at the feet of that giant kingdom—it was in the most characteristic use of prophecy, as the corrector of sense and the revealer of spirit, as the consoler of the crushed and the inspirer of the desperate—that it pleased God to reveal to Daniel, under the figure of a kingdom

independent of earth and time, that new Dispensation, that Gospel life, which should both repair the desolation of the present, and possess a vitality indestructible and eternal. 'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'

Five centuries and a half ran their course, and there came a voice, first 'in the wilderness of Judea,' and then 'in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim,' of which this word 'kingdom' was the key-note in the language alike of the herald

and the Redeemer. 'Repent : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Very remarkable is that selection—that unanimity of the Baptist and the Saviour. The 'kingdom,' not the priesthood—the kingdom, not the prophetship—is the note which Christ would impress upon the very infancy of His Gospel. And you know how consistently He adhered to it. You remember the seven parables, the week of holy instruction, of the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew—how each one of them contains some marked feature of the Gospel scheme, and how each one of them, with a single exception—an exception in form, not in reality—opens with the same preface, 'The kingdom of heaven is likened' unto this or that. It was the purpose of Christ to reveal, to claim, to institute, a kingdom. 'Art thou a king, then?' 'Thou sayest that I

am a king.' But 'my kingdom is not of this world.'

'Not of this world.' That is the first thought when we pray, 'Thy kingdom come.' We must put entirely on one side all images—and they are too apt to obtrude themselves—of earthly rule, whether disguised or open. We must set aside all accidental connections and alliances between Churches and States; all those adventitious advantages, as the world counts advantage, which one particular form of doctrine, of government, of ritual, may have gained for itself—much to the profit, we believe, of the State, if not always perhaps to the equal benefit of the Church—by the favour of Sovereigns, or the wisdom of legislatures, desiring to stamp upon civil and national institutions the consecrating superscription of the name of Christ and of God.

These are all matters for human thought and human action—they do not touch the real thing which is the subject of Christ's Prayer. 'Thy kingdom come' must be read and prayed in the light of His other saying, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' St. Paul gives us an inspired comment upon it when he says, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

The kingdom spoken of is a spiritual kingdom. It is the sovereignty of God in hearts. It is that reign, not of good, not of right, not of peace and forbearance and charity—these are fruits of it—but the essential thing is, that it is the reign of Our Father, revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, brought home to the man in the Holy Spirit—in hearts personally touched, separately quickened, individually dedicated

and consecrated to His willing and loving service.

Each point in this statement has its direct warrant in Scripture. 'The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.' 'The kingdom of God is within you.' 'The kingdom of God is like treasure hid in a field, which when a man hath found . . . he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.' 'The kingdom of God is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.' The kingdom of God is like a king's marriage-feast, at which each separate guest, if he would not be disowned and ejected, must have on his wedding garment. The kingdom of God is like a field in which tares and wheat are mingled, and in which, though the attempt to separate the two, in the present and

by human agency, must fail and is forbidden, yet only the true seed and the true plant can eventually hold the ground, or find a place hereafter in God's garner. 'Except a man be born again,' into the likeness of a child's docility and a child's innocence, 'he cannot see the kingdom of God.' It is true that the kingdom of God is like a vineyard into which the owner is perpetually, with endless patience, inviting even the idle and loitering, assuring them of a recompense, free and munificent, if they will, even late, hearken and enter. But if, to change the figure, if, when the great day comes, the professed expectant is found with expiring lamp and empty vessel, indolently hoping that another's grace or another's providence may suffice for the passport or the viaticum of two—or if, to vary the parable once more, the servant trusted with his



Lord's talent, instead of turning it to profit, has buried it in the earth, foolishly and irreverently answering in the day of account, 'Lo, there thou hast that is thine'—in all these cases the door of the kingdom, which stood wide open before, will be found closed against the admission, because it is a kingdom, not of name, but of power—not of form and profession, but of reality, spirit, and life.

This kingdom, thus defined for us by its King, has a past, a present, and a future. It has always been. In some of its essentials, it is as ancient as man's fall. So long as God has dealt with our race on a footing of mercy and judgment, so long there has existed the 'kingdom' which we speak of. The light of the Cross and the Resurrection was thrown back upon dead saints. The Epistle to the Hebrews

gathers past generations into the family and household of faith. Faint and flickering was the lamp of hope which they read by : still, in proportion as they drew nigh to and walked closely with God, they entered into the filial trust and the fatherly safeguard, and found in it strength to live and strength to die, as heirs of a home and a kingdom which God would manifest in His time.

The announcement of the kingdom, as instantly to be established, was the message of our Lord's personal ministry. To explain its nature, to write its principles on the hearts of its first preachers and heralds, was the object of His continuance below, more especially during the memorable forty days between Resurrection and Ascension. We are expressly told by St. Luke, that, during that interval, He was engaged, when

He visited the disciples, in 'speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom.' Its establishment was on the great day of Pentecost, when, having ascended into heaven, He sent forth the Holy Spirit, in all the varied offices of His Gospel grace, to be the Presence and the Power and the Life of God Himself in the hearts of them that believe. From that day to this, the kingdom has been a reality and a power upon the earth. Men have entered it outwardly by Baptism, inwardly by faith—the former a sacrament, involving promise, opportunity, responsibility—transferring a man from heathenism into a state of knowledge and grace, profitable or perilous according to its use—the latter a gift of God, answering prayer, and turning heart and life into a new capacity and a new nature. 'A great multitude, which no man can number,' is

the inspired reckoning of the citizens of that heavenly kingdom which is the reign of God in souls, separately convinced, converted, sanctified, and at last made meet for glory.

But the kingdom thus foreshadowed, thus established, thus realized, thus replenished, is not yet 'come.' We neither hope, nor pray, for that which is. The prayer, 'Thy kingdom come,' teaches us to distinguish the era of grace from the era of glory. It is a direct prayer for that consummation which shall be the final subjugation of all enemies—unbelief, misery, sin, at last death itself—to the great Lord of life and salvation, the final rolling away of the reproach of His people, the final entrance upon the everlasting inheritance for which a toiling and suffering Creation has been throughout its generations waiting and watching.

(1) Brethren, if this be so, it is a solemn and a responsible thing to pray, 'Thy kingdom come.' Think what is involved in it. It is a prayer for the Second Advent. It is a prayer for the close of the day of grace. It is a prayer for the termination of the world as we see it, of human life as we live it, with its mingling of good and evil, and for the introduction of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Who shall pray this prayer any more? Shall not the very command to pray it—the very charge, 'When ye pray, say, Thy kingdom come,'—divide us at once into two classes—of those who can, and of those who cannot?

I would be true to the Master's word and the Master's interpretation—for the truth's sake, and for love's sake no less. If the Word of God does not strike home, we are 'nothing bettered'

by it. The Lord's Prayer was given us, in part, as a touchstone—refuse it not. The Church herself has so read this petition. Standing by the open grave, we pray, all of us in our turn, as the hand of God smites us with a fresh bereavement, 'that it may please Him shortly to accomplish the number of His elect, and to hasten His kingdom.' Yet whose heart has not misgiven him, as he prayed that prayer, lest perhaps he be asking his own condemnation, his own exclusion from the grace of life? This is the Church's prayer—this is the Lord's prayer—is it, can it be, ours?

Not to daunt or discourage, but to help and to edify, is this word, like each word of God, written and spoken. We said upon the 'hallowing of the Name'—we will say now of the 'coming of the Kingdom'—that, over and above the full and

deep sense, in which the Church, in which the saint, prays for it, it has a sense, real and true, in which the 'babe in Christ' may ask it—and that it is one mark of the divinity of the Prayer, and therefore of the Lord who gave it, that it is thus manifold, thus versatile, in its meaning, on the lips of one and of another.

(2) 'Thy kingdom come'—may we not say, to me? Put down in me, O Father, all that exalts and magnifies itself against Thy law and against Thy rule.

'Mortify and kill all vices in me'—all corrupt desires, all rebel murmurings, all worldly ambitions, all resentful, proud, vainglorious thoughts—and establish in me that spiritual kingdom which is 'righteousness and peace and joy in Thy Holy Spirit.'

For is not this prayer akin to that? Is not

he who prays for the individual kingdom praying that which points to and makes preparation for the universal? Is not the 'coming' to the man one part of the mighty, the glorious, the magnificent Advent? Far better is it that we should pray *this* prayer with all our hearts than that we should pray *that* prayer with doubt or grudging.

But see, brethren! see how responsible a thing is even this lower and more limited asking. See how it pledges us to the warfare with evil. See how it places us on the side of God in the great war—how it makes it a treachery and a falsehood, afterwards, to go over to the sin and to the denial which is sure to assail and to entice us yet again.

Shall I pray, 'Thy kingdom come'—reign in me—reign over my appetites, reign over my passions, reign over my lusts—be King in my



heart—that I may perfectly love Thee, and count it base, disloyal, dishonourable, so much as to listen to Thy detraction or to Thy denial—and then go and do the abominable thing which Thou hatest? Forbid it, Lord! Let the Lord's Prayer be the Sacrament of my allegiance, the Sacrament of my devotion, the Sacrament of my love.

(3) I should be false to my charge, if I did not remind you also of the Missionary aspect of this prayer. 'Thy kingdom come' is a prayer for Missions. Wonderful, most wonderful, that Christendom should have prayed the Prayer for centuries, and gone to sleep over her duty! that it should have been possible to ask for the kingdom, and not to obey the mandate of Evangelization! May it be so no more. May a new spirit of self-forgetfulness come into the

Church's heart and into our own. They who cannot go may at least be instant in prayer. We have been ashamed to pray. They who were neither going nor giving could not pray. There was honesty, if there was condemnation, in the silence.

But now let us enter into the question as persons concerned. If we go not—if we see not the open door—if we are unfit to go—if we have other work found for us—if God wants us here—then, entering into judgment with ourselves, and so preventing (as St. Paul writes) the Divine judgment, we shall find the fountain of prayer unsealed, reopened—we shall keep alive at home the spirit of grace and of supplication—we shall feel ourselves in the field of Mission because in the field of intercession—'to pray is to toil'—to those who know what prayer is we shall add

fearlessly, 'to pray is, to toil, and to wrestle, and to bleed.'

(4) Is there one—there must be one in this large audience—not yet touched, not yet spoken to, in this poor comment, this feeble expostulation? Is there one, leaving the Church unimpressed—with no purpose of praying this prayer in either sense, its lower or its higher? Let me stay his departing step with one smallest request—that he will pray 'Thy kingdom come' as a prayer that he himself may at last reach heaven. You will say it is the wish of every man and all men. I know it. Yet I doubt whether it is the *prayer* of every man and all men. I doubt whether, day by day, at night and morning, every member of this Congregation earnestly prays to God for grace to die happy—for grace to reach heaven. Between the wish and the

prayer—between the vague general desire not to be lost for ever, not to be condemned in God's judgment, not to go away into everlasting punishment, and the earnest, resolute, I had almost said stern, prayer, to be brought safe to heaven, to be remembered when Christ comes in His kingdom—lies, for many, the whole distance and difference between a life of wickedness and a life of godliness. If you can pray this prayer in no other sense—neither as a prayer for the Advent, nor as a prayer for the reign of God in you, nor as a prayer for the reign of God on earth where now He is unknown—pray it thus. Pray it as a prayer, written for you by that kind, that compassionate, that martyred Friend, who will not let you go without a blessing—that you, you yourself, may not perish, but have everlasting life. 'Lord, remember

me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.' Pray this, day by day, from this time forth while you live—and if it may not be a safeguard against all evil, if it may not keep off from you all infection and contagion of sin, at least it shall save you from a scoffing, an infidel, an apostate spirit—from a life dead to the Saviour, and a soul cut off from its God.

THY KINGDOM COME.

#### IV.

‘THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS  
IN HEAVEN.’

Matt. vi. 10.

**I**T is a prayer. It is not an act of submission.

It is not an expression of acquiescence, such as a man defeated, or a man bereaved, or a man punished, may languidly breathe, in his chair or upon his bed, and count himself resigned, and, because resigned, religious. It is a prayer—one of the six prayers—brief, strong, explicit—of the one weighty and solemn Liturgy which our Lord Jesus Christ left behind Him to regulate and to quicken the perpetual worship of His struggling, suffering, and aspiring people.

A prayer must first be a wish. We cannot

ask as we ought, unless first we desire. It is this which makes so many prayers languid and lifeless. We do not wish for the graces, for the blessings, for the victories, which, as Christians, we must ask.

Yet even the wish must be prayed. Not every wish is a prayer—though, if it be not a sinful wish, it is ready to become a prayer. Prayer is a wish breathed into the ear of God.

The Lord's Prayer is no exception to these rules. To pray, we must ask—to ask, we must wish—to wish, we must understand. May this night's instruction help us—God grant it—with respect to this one grand, solemn, almost awful, petition—

‘THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS

IN HEAVEN.’

‘Who hath resisted His will?’ St. Paul asks,

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as though he would cut up by the roots all prayer for that which *must* be.

And it is indeed true that there are wills of God which need no praying for. That will of God which set Nature (as we speak) in motion—that will of God which keeps Providence (as we speak) in action—the one securing the orderly course of material systems, the other overruling the anxious, perilous, terrible march of cause and consequence, of reaping and sowing, in matters which have lives and souls for their factors and for their results—these two wills of God none can help and none can hinder : we can but make room for them, bow and submit ourselves, and let them work. At all events, with respect to those two wills of God, we must pray with a double peradventure—with a twice-guarded remembrance of our own insignificance as well as of



our own unworthiness, and with an entire willingness to be taught that, though we may entreat God to 'take away the cup' from us, we must be prepared to find that there is but one answer, and to believe that it is the best—'My grace is sufficient for thee—My strength is made perfect in weakness.'

But the 'will' of which this petition speaks is a will entirely within the scope of prayer.

St. Paul defines it when he says, 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.' Our Lord Himself indicates it when He says, 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.' And again, 'If any man will (wills to) do His will, he shall know of my doctrine.'

There is a will of God concerning our lives; concerning that part of our lives—the depart-


ment of inward and outward action—which it has pleased Him to set in our own power.

That marvellous free-will, characteristic of men and Angels—fettered only by some past choice of evil—never wholly lost, either in its responsibility or in its power—yet so prone to error and wrong, so heavily biassed in the direction of sinning, that it needs help from without, Divine help, to move, to guide, and to propel it towards its own good—this it is which can, in the present, within its own sphere, resist God, and can, with the most absolute confidence, be committed in prayer to God's keeping, for its correction, its control, its sanctification.

'Thy will be done'—in that province in which alone it finds opposition; in that region which Thou hast suffered for the present, for a little season—long to us, but brief in comparison with

the two eternities which it divides and keeps asunder—to be the arena and the battle-field of two combatants—good and evil—the one sure of victory, but the other ‘having great wrath because it knows that it hath but a short time.’ ‘Thy will be done’ in the will of man—in its powerful yet gentle subjugation to the will which is for his good and for his salvation. Grant success, O Father, to that agency of Gospel grace which Thou hast commissioned to work, and to spread, and to influence, until at last it bring all this one rebel race into blessed and joyous captivity to the Lord and to His Christ.

This petition, therefore, like the last preceding it, looks onward to a time still future. It prays not for the gradual, but for the complete. Let the time come—hasten the day—when it shall be said, Thy Will, O God, is done. There



can be no rest till then—no happiness till then—for the race, and for its earth. He who has the mind of Christ—he who knows anything of the meaning of the ‘sigh’ accompanying the ‘Ephphatha’—will find no fulness of satisfaction even in his own emancipation from the fetter of corruption and from the bondage of the will. He will still pray—yes, if it be in the Paradise of the blessed—‘Thy will be done,’ so long as there is one unevangelized nation, or one unsanctified soul, or one sin-bound will, on a still rebel and exile earth. ‘Thy will be done’ is a prayer still unanswered, so long as the prayer beside it has still to be prayed, ‘Thy kingdom come.’

We have said concerning the other—we will say also concerning this—that it makes a great demand upon the faith and upon the devotion.

The Lord's Prayer, short, simple, homely as it is, tries to the uttermost the spirituality of His people. To be bidden to ask all for God, and then all for the brethren—to have no place, no corner, left for self, in that act which might seem to have its chief explanation in the individual want and weakness—this is severe. But to be bidden, in this unselfish self-forgetting devotion, to ask for things which cannot be till earth is heaven—which cannot be fulfilled till sin, with all its pleasures and all its excitements, which go so far to make this life what it is, shall have been utterly vanquished and exterminated, and all things, literally all things, shall have become new—this is indeed a call of infinite difficulty—it might almost drive us back from that which promised to be our help and our consolation, and make us say, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'

who amongst us is capable of praying this Prayer?

But, while it is a great office of the Lord's Prayer to humble us for our backwardness and for our earthliness and for our carnal mind, Christ meant us never to be destitute, in its use and in its possession, of a help and a guide, whatsoever we be, in our approaches to the Father who is in heaven. Therefore let us think now, in what sense we, who dare not pray for the mighty Advent, with its terrible attendant Judgment, and all the fearful severances and separations then to be made even amongst those who have here dwelt lovingly and securely together—in what sense, I say, we may yet pray the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy will be done,' without unreality and without irreverence.

The greater has in it the less—the final the

progressive—the perfect the partial. Every man who does the will of God prepares, promotes, even hastens, its fulfilment. ‘Thy will be done, with me, by me, in me,’ is a prayer, and the best of prayers, for its accomplishment in the universe. That I, in my individual insignificant place in God’s earth, may be entirely submissive, entirely obedient, entirely receptive of His holy influence, entirely of one will with His holy will, is a prayer, and the best of prayers, for the conformity of all men everywhere and eternally to His design and to His purpose concerning them.

(1) Let us pray this prayer. It shall not be cast out. Not in a spirit of indolent acquiescence, not in a spirit of reluctant resignation, not in the spirit of one who has tried all turns and all escapes, and has to confess himself outmatched

by a subtler or vanquished by a mightier—but rather as one who recognizes a Father's hand and a Father's love in the power that constrains him, and would not, even if he could, have any one thing other than it is, or any voice at all of his own, in the arrangement of his circumstances of joy or sorrow—thus let us pray the prayer, Thy will be done with me.

(2) There is another aspect of the petition. God has a will concerning our actions. He has given to each one his work and his talent. It is a wonderful thought—but perfectly true—that God, in the high and holy heaven, cares what we do ; would have us occupied thus, not thus, this day, this hour ; would have us go hither, not thither ; see this person, not that ; express ourselves thus, use our influence thus, write this letter, attend this Service, say this prayer. I do



not think that the particularity has in it anything derogatory to His dignity or to His majesty. The same God, to whom nothing can be great but Himself, both guides the stars in their courses, and 'feedeth the young ravens that cry.' 'The hairs of your head are all numbered'—and 'not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father.' If one word of all this be true, judge ye what a responsible, what an anxious matter it must be to do the will of God. How needful must it be for us to pray this prayer early in the morning, and to live in the spirit of it all the day long—Thy will, O God, be done by me.

(3) There is yet one other aspect of the prayer. We know that God looks on the heart. No minuteness of obedience in outward act could do anything towards the fulfilment of that

will which is our sanctification. That sanctification, which is (in other words) consecration, the making the whole man to belong to God—will, judgment, feeling, affection—so that each shall move in perfect spontaneous harmony with the mind of Him whose he is and whom he serves—this is a higher and a deeper thing even than the conduct : here, in all this, God Himself is present, not in the stream, but at the source and spring of the life : and then only do we pray thoroughly the prayer of the text, even in this its present and personal application, when we breathe in the ear of God this honest, this fervent entreaty, Thy will, O my Father, be done, day by day, not with me only, nor by me, but in me, within me, also.

Brethren ! be not hasty to assume that we can all pray this prayer. Before we ask of ourselves

that practical, that closing question, I must beg you to accompany me into that scene high above us, which Christ here opens to contemplation—

‘As it is done in heaven.’

It is very natural, but it is great presumption also, to imagine that there is no life, no appreciable or intelligible life, except that of this one small planet, the scene of our own exploits and our own experiences. Some have gone so far as to argue against the possible inhabitation of any star or any sun proved or supposed to be incapable of supporting the existence of beings organized in all respects precisely as we are. We are all of us but too prone thus (as the Psalmist says of Israel) to ‘limit the Holy One,’ and rather to imagine a desert universe of space, and a void eternity of time, than to allow the possibility of God working in divers manners in

the formation and in the sustentation of beings illustrating a Creator's resources or echoing a Creator's praise.

Much more forcibly is this narrowness of conception exemplified, when we pass from the material to the spiritual—from a Creation embodied in form to a Creation invisible and insubstantial. They who, like us, find it difficult to realize at all the life of spirit, may well find it embarrassing to conceive an existence in which the spirit is the life. It suits well the arrogance as well as the indolence of humanity, to profess scepticism as to a heaven 'peopled with spirits,' or a life in which God, present in nearer self-manifestation, is absolutely the 'All in all' to intelligences high above ourselves alike in the intuition of truth and in the exercise of power.

Yet a world thus mysterious, thus magnificent,

Christ has opened to us, for our humiliation, for our instruction, for our consolation—and in His own Prayer He bids us make mention of it as a plea with God.

Not to gratify curiosity, not to encourage speculation, not even to create a theology, has Christ spoken anywhere, or here. He has given no systematic revelation, in any part of His Word, concerning Angelic history or Angelic existence. What He has said is practical. What He has said is incidental—naturally occasioned by the subject of discourse, and directly subservient to the object in view.

Here He illustrates by the services of heaven the nature and the compass of obedience below. 'Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.' Three points will be found revealed to us concerning the life of Angels, each one of which

has a direct bearing upon the earthly and the human.

(1) The first of these is their holiness. 'The holy Angels' Christ calls them. Holiness is self-dedication. They have no place in heaven, but as absolutely devoted. Devotion to God is their life. The consecration of the holy Angels is not the putting on of a robe, or the exercise of a ministry—it is the Divine ownership going through and through them, so as to exclude and preclude any faintest spot or taint of the thing which is not God's.

(2) The second point is the vitality—the wonderful vigour and alacrity and unweariedness of their service. They are spoken of as 'excelling in strength;' as listening for God's words, that they may instantly obey; as 'ministering spirits,' performing a liturgical, a priestly service

in which worship is obedience, action rest, and fervour festivity. Labouring and heavy-laden souls—finding, each day, the weariness which clogs the devotion, and the ‘weakness of the flesh’ which ever fetters and manacles the ‘willingness of the spirit’—learn here your hope and your consolation. Be faithful unto death—and the crown that awaits you is not more of victory than of life.

• (3) The third point in the life of heaven is the love. For one glimpse of power, or even of holiness, Christ gives us ten revelations of the love. The very life of ‘that world’ is self-forgetfulness. The ministering spirits minister to the heirs of salvation. The Angels who behold the face of God in heaven are the Angels of Christ’s little ones. The Angels who shall share His glory in the Advent, and execute His solemn

behests of discrimination in the Judgment, are they who not only 'desire to look into' the secrets of His redemption, or study the ' manifold wisdom ' in the dispensations of His Church, but who rejoice with a joy individual and unspeakable in the repentance of one sinner, and keep the feet of the imperilled saint as he treads his darkling way through the rugged wilderness of this world.

If, then, we ask how the will of God must be done on earth, Christ answers for us, 'As it is done in heaven.'

By holiness—by diligence—by love.

(1) By casting away everything that defileth. By waging a resolute war with God's enemy, which is sin. By cultivating that thought—that we belong to Another, who made us, bought us, owns us, as our Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—



which, if it were in us always, would be a panoply of Christian armour against world and flesh and devil.

(2) By stirring up the gift that is in us to a livelier, a brighter, and a more kindling glow. By being ashamed of our own sloth and our own self-indulgence, when we think of a service which continues day and night for ever—a service not more above than around us—in which beings created as we are, find their one happiness and their one repose.

(3) Above all, by setting ourselves to that which is the very work of heaven—sympathy with, love for, ministry to, all that bear, however faintly, however imperfectly, however unworthily, Christ's name, God's likeness, the Spirit's mark, below. And who are these? Who shall limit or exclude where God has not spoken? Who shall,

say, 'These, not those,' when all alike have been created, have been redeemed, have been taken into the family and signed with the sign?

In heaven there is no disobedience, no indolence, and no selfishness. In heaven all is holiness, all is alacrity, all is love. Do we pray that we may do the will of God as it is done in heaven? By this prayer we condemn ourselves if we live sinfully, if we live indolently, if we live selfishly. By this prayer we strengthen ourselves for a life of purity, for a life of diligence, for a life of love. By this prayer we comfort ourselves in sadness and sorrow, when we look upward into the infinite heaven, and see it inhabited by glorified and blessed spirits, our companions, our friends, our fellow-worshippers, already one with us in spirit, soon to be our associates in the bright and holy Presence for

ever. 'Look up, and lift up your heads: for redemption is nigh.' 'Be strong, and very courageous'—for that 'Will' which is our work is also our hope. 'It is not the Will, that one should perish.' 'It is the Will, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should never perish.' Not for your merits, but of His own infinite love, 'it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

THY WILL BE DONE—IN EARTH—AS

IT IS IN HEAVEN!

## V.

‘GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.’

Matt. vi. 11.

TILL now we have been in Heaven. Each petition began there. The Name—the great Name—that which God is—that which God, ‘passing by’ (as it were) before us, in His glory, in His Son Jesus, has revealed Himself to be—let it be hallowed. Grant, O Father, that it be hallowed—that Thou, Thou thyself, even such as Thou art, mayest be regarded, and remembered, and revered, in Thy universe, on Thy earth, by Thy creatures—by us—by me.

The Kingdom—that reign, not over, but in, the willing—that reign in lives dedicated, in

hearts sprinkled, in spirits indwelt of Thy Spirit—grant, O Father, that it may not only be, but come; not only exist, in its capital, where Christ is, where Angels, and spirits of the righteous, are the citizens and the inhabitants; not only exist, in its outlying dependencies, of flesh and blood, of sense and time, where toiling, struggling, suffering men and women are trying to obey, and hungering and thirsting for loyalty; but, at last, in the fulness of time, ‘come down from God out of heaven,’ and make itself recognized as a reality, and felt as a power.

The Will—the great Will—that which is all love—that which would have all men happy—that which would have consecration coextensive with existence—grant, O Father, that that beautiful, that beneficent Will may be done, not by a few, not amidst weariness and painfulness,

not by willing spirits encased in reluctant flesh—but as it is done in Heaven—by Angels excelling in strength, listening that they may obey, and flying unwearied on their ministrations of love!

We have touched, sometimes, in these meditations, upon the help given to Prayer by having its subjects lifted heaven-high. Men who might scruple to ask God anything for themselves are asked here to forget and lose themselves in higher, holier, grander contemplations. *Never mind yourself*, Christ says to us. Get you into God's presence, and think about *Him*. A little atom of His great Name, His great Kingdom, His great Will, has thee inside it—but think not, first or chiefly, of that. There is no comfort, there is no strength, there is no reality, and certainly no permanence, anywhere where Self

is. Try to say, and to feel, *I matter not—I signify not*. There are greater beings than I, greater affairs than mine, present, proceeding, in God's immense universe. If I were blotted out, expunged, annihilated, it would make no perceptible blank. The happiness, yes (strange to say), the dignity, of the creature, lies in his absorption in the Creator. The very object of Prayer is to practise this suicide of self. It is astonishing how invigorating, how elevating, how comforting, that attempt is. How often is it seen, in maladies mental or bodily, that the first step towards relief is in self-forgetfulness! Become interested in the malady of some one else. It may seem impossible—it may seem mockery—it may seem heartless so much as to breathe it—nevertheless there, in the very endeavour, lies the first step towards con-

valescence. Even thus is it—with reverence I speak it—in the sacred matter of Prayer. Kneel down to pray about your own soul's aches and pains, fever-fits and agues—you may rise as you knelt, unrefreshed, un comforted, apparently unattended to. But go into that Presence, to think of God and His matters—to leave Self outside while you pray, sure to meet it soon enough when you rise to depart—and you will find that your very sufferings have shrunk to small dimensions : you will have seen how light they are in comparison with the cries and groans of a creation : you will have seen how absolutely trifling they are when weighed against the Name, and the Kingdom, and the Will : you will have seen, too, how safely they can be trusted in the hands of Him who not only ' telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by their



names,' but also numbers the very hairs of the head, and feeds the young ravens that instinctively, unconsciously, cry to Him for His help.

But, although this is the first lesson of the Lord's Prayer, it is not the only one. Everything in the Gospel is so real, that Christ never leaves us with a demand for attainments far above out of our sight, nor suffers us to think Him indifferent to the relative magnitude of things which are our life. So then, having prayed, 'Lift us to heaven,' He bids us now to pray, 'Come Thou to earth.' Want is real—sin is real—temptation is real: the prayer which left out these would be the prayer of dreams and fancies, pious sentiments and unpractical emotions—not of real life, not of manly sympathy, not of Divine help. Christ would make prayer real;

and therefore the last half of it is about *us*—though not about *me*.

We have the first of three petitions before us to-night. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Or, if I might be allowed to set it before you in its expressive Greek order—'Our bread—our daily (bread)—give us—to-day.' St. Luke says, 'day by day.'

It lies on the surface of this prayer to notice how plain, how elementary, is the supply which we ask for. We ask not for dainties or luxuries, whether bodily, mental, or spiritual. Want is that which we plead. Not wishes, not indulgences, not fancies—not, for example, wealth, or distinction, or fame, or power—not great opportunities of acquiring knowledge, or cultivating taste, or enjoying society—not even religious advantages, as we might reckon them,

of hearing eloquent Sermons, or reading a multitude of books, or living in the midst of multiplied or exceptionally profitable Services. We ask for 'bread.' It ought not, I think, to be doubted (1) that 'bread' here stands for all necessary supplies, whether of food, clothing, dwelling-place, health, reason, bodily faculties, or suitable companionship—leaving entirely and absolutely to God the decision, in kind and in degree, what these are for us ; (2) nor, again, that 'bread' stands here for spiritual as well as earthly support, and that He who calls Himself expressly 'the Bread of Life' would have His grace, His presence, His Holy Spirit, implored by us here under the figure which He has specially consecrated to that mystery of inward growth and of Divine communion. If it were not so, the Lord's Prayer would be destitute of

all allusion to one chief part of the soul's life. Speaking of forgiveness and deliverance, it would not speak of that which is the root of all life—the personal, spiritual connection with the Spring and Fountain of being.

Each word of Christ is significant. 'Bread,' we know, nourishes not without conditions. There must be the frame adapted to it; and that frame must be in health, not in disease. There must be a process, which it is not man's to direct or to rule over, of digestion and assimilation within—else the food will lie useless, and worse than useless, however excellent its quality, or however moderate its use. When we pray for bread, we pray for all that is necessary to make bread nutritious. Even so, when we pray for the bread of life, which is Christ, we pray for that use of Christ, for that digestion and assimilation

of Christ, without which He might be all that He is in Himself, He might be all that He ought to be to others, and yet we ourselves might be nothing profited.

Therefore Christ bids us to say, '*Our* bread.' Our kind of bread—that which is suitable. Our portion of bread—that which is enough. The bread which is made ours by honest labour. The bread which we share with others by generous, by unselfish imparting. This, interpreted by the subject, by the particular province, this day, of thought and prayer—body, mind, soul, circumstance—duty, anxiety, age, work, character—this will give at once amplitude and definiteness to that which is suggested as the matter of the petition—'Bread'—'Our bread.'

The epithet appended is less easy. Our English Version gives it as 'daily.' But it is,

indeed, a word of marvellous difficulty. It has been called by one of the old writers, 'the rack of theologians.' In all the voluminous remains of Greek literature, it occurs nowhere but here. Chrysostom says that it seems to have been coined by the two Evangelists. They have thus expressed in Greek some phrase used by our Lord in giving this Prayer orally—and their translation of His word is full of ambiguity.

We will just record the fact, for what it may be worth, that here is one *original* word (at least) in the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is not, as some would give us to understand, a mere compilation. It is well, perhaps, that it should be difficult. At least it cannot be overlooked. Here is a word, to which different scholars, from very early times, have given at least three widely different senses.

That of the old Latin Version, so venerable in its antiquity, so extensive in its circulation, is 'supersubstantial'—meaning, I suppose, immaterial, or incorporeal. This would at once elevate, and restrict, the petition to a spiritual sense. It would take from the Lord's Prayer its merciful care for body as well as soul. In the same degree, it would make it less Divine, by making it less human. The maintenance of this rendering, though not its introduction, has probably been aided by the support which it seemed to give to the Romanist Transubstantiation—turning the prayer itself into a superstitious fancy, asking for the efficacy of the sacramental bread as changed into the very body of our Lord Jesus Christ. The interpretation does such violence to the Greek, that it is itself a standing evidence

of the perplexity and desperation of commentators.

A second conjectural rendering of the word has been 'sufficient.' It has been imagined to be the opposite of another Greek word imagined to mean 'superfluous'—and so to be the brief compendium of the well-known prayer of the Old Testament, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches : feed me with food convenient for me.'

The remaining possible interpretation is one which derives the adjective from a common Greek expression for 'to-morrow'—'the day which is coming on.' At first sight a prayer for 'to-morrow's bread' might seem to be in conflict with the closing words of this Chapter, which forbid anxiety about the morrow, and say, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' But that anxiety about to-morrow which turns itself



into prayer, changes its aspect at once. To refer to-morrow to God—to leave to-morrow, by an express act of faith, in God's hands—is no unchristian anxiety, it is rather a most Christian and a most godly providence.

There is this also to be remembered—not always, I think, treated with the consideration which it deserves. The Hebrew day began with the evening. From sunset to sunset was its measure. Suppose then that the Lord's Prayer was viewed as the first act of the new day, it contains on that supposition a prayer for the bread of the day then coming on ; a day which might indeed, in one sense, be called 'to-morrow,' inasmuch as the night had yet to precede and to usher in its work and its refreshment, yet was legally and by custom the very day itself, begun when the prayer was said, and uniting in itself

the two characteristics of a 'to-morrow,' and a 'to-day.'

'Our bread for the morrow,' a morrow already (in one sense) begun, 'give us,' Father, 'to-day.' It is the Evening Prayer of the Hebrew Christian Church. The bread for the coming day is asked overnight. That coming day will end, as it begins, at evening, and then the prayer for the next twenty-four hours' supplies will naturally and of course succeed this.

'Our bread—for the coming day—give us to-day.' The want, the sum of the want, is carried to the Father, and one little word 'give' transfers the whole from the region of weakness and confusion, into the region of perfect Wisdom, of limitless Power, of infinite Love.

There is no prohibition here—but neither do I see any compulsion here—of that sort of

minuteness of detail in 'making known our requests,' which some have made the test of earnestness and the condition of having. As with sins, so with wants, God allows much latitude, much freedom, to them that diligently seek Him. One man kneels long, and goes minutely through his budget of sorrows : another, or the same man another day, never unties his bundle, but leaves it before the mercy-seat to 'tarry the Lord's leisure.' We will put no yokes upon necks which Christ has left free. If prayer is short, it may be so because faith is strong—not because you grudge the time, but because God is so quick, so ready, in listening. Or if it even be so that you find a few words often, a little visit often, dearer to you and more efficacious than a rarer and more protracted audience—be it so : a brother or a sister is not

under bondage in such cases : 'stand fast in the liberty,' each one, 'wherewith Christ has made all free.' Do just what will most attract you to the mercy-seat. It is more important that you should love the Presence-chamber, than that you should say exactly this, or stay precisely so long, when you find yourself alone with the Great King.

We said something, once, of the two Versions (so to speak) of the Lord's Prayer—St. Luke's and St. Matthew's. We noticed that St. Luke omits altogether, according to the best authorities, the petition, 'Thy Will be done.' He saw it, no doubt, in the two former. He saw the Will included and enveloped in the Name and the Kingdom. Very beautiful, we thought, was that freedom—that protest, so to say, against formalism, against the idolatry of the letter,

even in the one inspired Liturgy of the ransomed Church. In the petition before us the varieties are small but instructive. (1) St. Matthew says, 'Give' in one giving—St. Luke says, 'Give' on—give continuously, and from time to time—the bread sought. Yes, there are two aspects even of the giving. St. Matthew touches the readiness, St. Luke touches the steadiness—St. Matthew the promptitude, St. Luke the patience—of God's supply. (2) St. Matthew says, 'To-day'—St. Luke says, 'Day by day.' St. Matthew says, 'Sufficient unto the day is the want thereof'—St. Luke says, 'And if there should be for you a to-morrow, for it also God will provide—Yea, trust Him with it now—commit it to Him now—He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.'

Verily we serve a God of love.

Brethren! we have here the annihilation of anxiety. He who can pray the Lord's Prayer from the heart must be happy, must be free. He has a Father in heaven, interested in him, pledged to him, once, twice, and thrice—by Creation and Redemption, by express promise, by personal ownership, by a work already begun, by a work which He for His part will most surely perform. He has not only a general permission, a general encouragement, to make his desires known—he possesses a petition, drawn up for him by the King, asking (and therefore promising) the supply of all his need, each day, and all the days, of his pilgrimage towards the Home. Where is anxiety, then, where is risk, where is fear, except it be in the wilful neglect of praying, or in the undutiful repudiation of his very relationship to the Eternal?

You may say, But God gives equally to the evil and to the good. This which you declare to be the privilege of the faithful, is shared with them by the prayerless and by the profane. It is true. This Sermon on the Mount speaks of gifts bestowed alike upon the just and upon the unjust—gifts of rain and sunshine, of food from heaven and fruitful seasons—which it is the condemnation of thousands to receive without prayer and to enjoy without thanksgiving. But is there no difference—none even in outward things—none even as to enjoyment—between the man who idly takes and selfishly uses the gifts of God, and the man who knows and confesses whence they come, and is able to say, with humble faith, ‘My Father giveth me all things richly to enjoy?’ You who have hearts to feel, you whose human affections are not

blunted in you by sin, say if there is no difference, in value and in preciousness, between the thing which you bought with your money, and the thing which was the keepsake of your friend. Even such—only in a degree beyond compare—even such is the bread eaten as an accident—the bread which must be eaten in secret, lest the owner should punish or should reclaim—and the bread which you received consciously at God's hand, and for which, to God your Father, you daily give thanks. Some have even ventured the saying, that the bread of the wicked is given at the prayer of the just—that the 'us' and the 'our' are of universal compass, and that the supply of a world is the fruit of the intercession of a Church.

Here, finally, in the Prayer taught by the Lord, is that true Equality which is the basis of



a true Fraternity—that equal platform, of creatureship and of redemption, on which high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, meet together, in the presence, at the footstool, of one God, who is the Maker and the Saviour and the Comforter of all. Here the anxiety of poverty, here the security of wealth—here the pride of greatness, here the shame of obscurity—lose themselves, all alike, and are forgotten, in that deep underlying unity of a common dependence and a common humanity and a common immortality, which ‘makes of one blood all nations of men that dwell on the face of the whole earth.’ Here let us learn Christ’s lesson of humility, of hope, of courage—yea, that higher lesson still, which is the very mind that was in Him, who, being in the form of God, for our sake became man, that He might raise us ‘out

of darkness and error into the clear light and true knowledge' of Him who is the Fountain of Life as of Love, and in whose light alone His created can see light.



## VI.

‘AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE  
OUR DEBTORS.’

Matt. vi. 12.

‘AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS ; FOR WE ALSO  
FORGIVE EVERY ONE THAT IS INDEBTED TO US.’

Luke xi. 4.

A GOSPEL is in the words. Here, in the Master's Prayer, given for the perpetual use of all men, is mention made of ‘sins’ as belonging to all, and of ‘forgiveness’ as ready for all ; and the little particle ‘and’ couples this petition, as though it were the easiest and most natural thing in the world, to the request for ‘daily bread.’ Could all this be so, if Christ our Lord were not teaching us, that which God only could

know, that of which the reality could only have been seen in heaven, concerning that most impossible thing to flesh and blood—‘the absolution and remission of our sins?’

Let us, first, as is our wont, take fully into view the words themselves which Christ has here uttered on purpose that we may utter them after Him in the ear of God.

What a change of scene and of subject! Last week we were thinking of want: next week we shall be thinking of danger: to-night we are to think of sin. Is not sin as real, as vital, a thought as the other two? Must not that life, that soul, be in evil case, which has no word to say about its sins when it ‘bows itself before the High God?’

We have different phrases in Scripture to express sin. We have two before us in the texts.

We are in debt. We have known, perhaps, at some moment of our boyhood or manhood, what the burden of a debt may be towards man—how it undermines strength, destroys rest, makes cowards and criminals of the bravest and the most upright. ‘The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty:’ what matters the sum, if we ‘have not to pay?’

That which a debt is toward man, a sin is toward God. We may not equally be conscious of it. Alas! too often we lead tranquil lives enough, lose neither rest nor appetite, can even play as well as work, when we are drowned in debt to God. It is only when something occurs, within or without, to make truth real—some threatened exposure, some dreaded punishment, at least some distress, or danger, or sickness, or approaching death—that sin starts into life, and

becomes 'a burden too heavy for us to bear.' Even then it is not always the sin—it is more often only the consequence of sin—which alarms and bewilders us. Sin as a debt is a strange thought still to many. Not until Christ begins to be real—Christ, and the Cross—shall we ever feel it as we ought. Then shall we see how not only a few prayers, or a few almsgivings, or a few Communions, but we ourselves, soul and body, were God's own, and could only be kept back from Him, either in obedience or in deep heart's affection, by a fraud and a dishonesty adding debt to debt.

St. Luke has yet another word. 'Forgive us our sins.' That commonest of all words for our wrong-doing, suggests the thought, rather, of 'failure'—of missing the aim and mark of being—of 'coming short of the glory' for which God

destined us as the recipients of grace and the reflectors of His image. It is a glorious ideal—seen, not least, in its failure. We ought to have been so much—we are so little. We ought, here below, to have represented God Himself one to another. We ought to have made others to see how beautiful God is in His love and in His holiness. We have not done so. We have ‘all sinned, and come short of His glory.’ There are souls capable of entering into this idea of sin. What might we have been? what might we not have been? and what are we? O the capabilities of this being! Yes, I see, I see in the sorrowful retrospect, what I might have been to my friends, to my fellows, to my generation. This is that ‘failure’ which I bring to God in saddest, lowliest, most remorseful supplication.



‘We are in the land of debts,’ says a great Reformer: ‘we are up to the ears in sin.’ How wonderful that Christ the Redeemer should thus mercifully recognize by anticipation the very failure of His own Redemption—that He should thus incorporate in His own Prayer the recognition of that failure—that, whereas He came ‘that we should not sin,’ He yet bids us pray on the supposition that we have sinned! I know nothing more human, more Divine, anywhere in His Gospel, than this recognition. A vulgar, coarse, scoffing intellect, says, ‘Christ knew that He would be a failure.’ I venture to say, on the contrary, That Divine Person knew that in tenderness, in sympathy, in the confession of the human weakness which would, no doubt, in part defeat the present triumph, the earth-witnessed glory, of His Gospel, lay a greater triumph, and

a greater glory, still, in the eventual manifestation of a strength perfected in weakness.

But so it is. The Lord's Prayer, having only six petitions, and, of these, three about God, makes mention, for Christian people, of debts, of trespasses, of sins, as quite every-day experiences, as much as are the wants of soul and body, or the dangers spread before us in life's future. 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.'

Brethren! the forgiveness of sins is a revelation peculiar to the Gospel. Nature has no sure message concerning it. Nature has oftentimes to punish transgression with a sternness quite relentless. The only teacher of forgiveness prior to the Gospel—and that but in parable and dark saying—was the Law given by Moses. Those much-maligned, much-despised sacrifices of the Levitical system were indeed the 'shadow

cast before' of a Gospel afterwards to be revealed. Those sacrifices, which could not, of themselves, take away sins, were God's prophecy of an Atonement to a nation sense-bound and carnal. And when Christ came, He spoke, Himself, of forgiveness, as the most difficult, the most absolutely undiscoverable, of all God's secrets. He said that even Sanctification was less abstruse than Justification. He said that no one could tell of Atonement but He who had been in Heaven. That was *the* revelation—in comparison with which even Regeneration, the new birth by the Spirit, was easy and of the earth. Brethren! if it were not for Christ's clear revelation, I could not believe in a free forgiveness. Cause and effect, antecedent and consequence, are so linked and bound together on God's earth, that the idea of their severance—

which is, in other words, the release of the soul that has sinned from the death which sin merits—can only be accepted as the explicit assertion, the direct revelation, of Him who knows all things, and was present when the very foundations of earth and time were laid. Christ appeals to that original, that celestial knowledge. I believe Him—because I never yet knew the thing in which He lied. I believe Him—because I find, in His life and in His work, so clear a proof that He came from God with a message, and that that message was love, was forgiveness, was a cancelling of the debt, for souls sunk in self and dead in sin.

Now He bids us here to believe in that forgiveness—and to believe in it as daily needed and always sure.

Have any of us been led away with the error

of an instantaneous perfection? Can we so read the Bible, or so inspect the mirror of conscience, as to imagine ourselves not to sin? Poor deluded victims of a superstition which does violence to fact! Is not the dream of present perfection sin enough in itself? Is it not the denial of one half (at least) of the very work of Christ—the denial of the Priesthood, if not of the Sacrifice? Is it not to expunge one whole petition from the Prayer of Christ? We will use that Prayer in its simplicity—and while we use it, we can dream no dream of an attained perfection.

Beautifully, I think, has the width and compass of sin been expressed by a holy man lately departed. ‘Duties unfulfilled; words unspoken, or spoken lightly, violently, or untruly; holy relationships neglected; days wasted, and now gone for ever; evil thoughts once cherished,

which are ever re-appearing as fresh as when they were first admitted into the heart ; talents cast away ; affections trifled with ; light within turned to darkness'—such is our 'debt ;' our 'trespass ;' our 'sin.'

An older saint than he has said—for the Church of the fourth century and the Church of the nineteenth century are one and the same—'Call not yourselves righteous, as though ye had no cause to say, "Forgive us our debts." Though ye abstain from murder . . . and such other sins which I do not name . . . still there is no want of occasions whereby a man may sin. A man sins when he sees with pleasure what he ought not to see. How great sins doth the deadly tongue commit ! How often do we pray, and our thoughts are elsewhere—as though we forgot before whom we are standing, or before

whom we are prostrating ourselves ! If all these things be collected together against us, will they therefore not overwhelm us because they are small faults ! What matter is it whether lead or sand overwhelm us ? The lead is all one mass, the sand is small grains, but by their great number they overwhelm thee. So thy sins are small. Seest thou not how the rivers are filled, and the lands are wasted, by small drops ? They are small, but they are many.' Such is our 'debt,' our 'trespass,' our 'sin.'

Forgive — remit — dismiss it. Wonderful prayer—addressed to Him who commanded the opposite of all these things—who has knit together act and consequence—and to whom now we appeal to undo His own work. Was ever miracle greater than this miracle ? To roll back the Red Sea or the Jordan upon itself

were easier surely, far easier, than this—this undoing of the thing done—this cancelling of the unpayable debt.

This, brethren, is the miracle of miracles of the Gospel Dispensation. You count it a great thing—it is so—when you see the Holy Ghost breathing into dead matter newness of life; when you see the lifeless affection rekindled, and the sinner, buried in his lusts and passions, quickened out of that grave into newness of life. But surely even this miracle, were infinites comparable, might shrink into insignificance in contrast with that one other. In this, you see the effect, if not the instrumentality. You hear the wind, if you cannot track it. In the other, all is faith, all is supernatural, all is Divine. God, by the *fat* of His own ‘Let there be light,’ bids the past, which is a real existence, shrivel




up, and be no more. God bids the wicked act which you did last night, in your wantonness or in your refusal to reflect, to die with itself and bear no fruit. Did you think, when you lightly or summarily said last night's prayer, 'Forgive us our sins,' all, all that was involved in it? You might not—but Christ did. Christ, who presided over Creation—Christ, who became Incarnate that He might 'become sin'—Christ took the measure of it. Christ taught that Prayer which you uttered—only I cannot tell whether the lips which said it meant it, felt it, or 'babbled' in the uttering.

And now, brethren, what say we? Is there any condition here? any condition of confession first, to man, or to God? I dismiss the former question, of confession to man, because it seems to me utterly and absolutely out of place—except,

indeed, as one part of that 'forgiveness of our own debtors ' upon which a word will be said ere we have done. I cannot believe that Christ meant any man to come, even as a helper, even as an abettor, between the soul and its God. It is the glory, it is the originality, it is the power, of the Gospel, that it brings together, face to face, without any intermediate, the two Beings which are at issue, God and the soul. You say you can help this meeting—take heed that you do not hinder it. If Christ had intended a priest, I think that He would have said so. I do not think that the soul needs any information, any instruction, as to its secrets—except what it can derive, if it will, from the public ministry of the Word.

At all events, when the assistance has been given, or without it, the soul and its God must

stand face to face. And the soul must then pray Christ's prayer, very earnestly, very humbly, and very believingly, 'Forgive us'—not me only—me, and all men—there lies the very strength, and the very tenderness, of the supplication—'Forgive us our trespasses.' What trespasses? God might answer. Yes—for there are men, doubtless, who pray this prayer, which ought to be so humbling, with a self-ignorant, self-satisfied feeling. Therefore the first necessity is, that sin should be a reality to us. Christ was wont to say on earth—God says in like manner from heaven—'What wilt thou that I should do for thee?' That question is sometimes received with a stare of wonder. 'Did I not speak? Did I not pray the Lord's Prayer? My bread—my sins—my temptations—all in a breath—all promiscuously, and of course—Give




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—forgive—deliver.’ Is that prayer? God must be enquired of, even concerning His promise—else is there no voice, nor any to answer.

Therefore, when we reach the prayer for forgiveness, there must first be confession. But, I ask again, what confession? Is there no pleading for forgiveness, with God Himself, without a detail and catalogue of trespasses? Is there no such possibility as a sense of sin, sharp and deep, without one description, or one rehearsal, or one express mention, of a particular transgression? Is there, think you, any conviction of sin, more real or more acceptable, than that which sees Christ on His cross, and sees me in my sin, and desires to bring together, as two entire entities, the sinner and the Saviour? which is not so much affected by that one rash word, or that one careless omission, or that one sinful action,

as by the utter and total blackness which made it necessary that such a 'fountain' should be 'opened for sin and for uncleanness,' and which makes it necessary that I, all black, should plunge myself in it, should wash and be clean?

It is well that there should be enough of minuteness to prevent the possibility of unreality and vagueness. Some sins, some kinds of sins, are better left in the general. Others, specimens and samples, may with advantage be looked into and spread open. But memory is insidious as well as treacherous—and I would not have a man too curious in searching and exploring it. See that you feel as well as call yourself a sinner—but know and believe that God knows all things, and trust Him to apply your prayer to the history of the life open before Him. One earnest gaze upon Christ is worth a thousand



scrutinies of self—the man who beholds the cross, and beholding it weeps, cannot be really blind nor perilously self-ignorant.

Above all things we are to beware of diminishing our sins by attempts at self-exculpation. ‘Be merciful unto my sin : for it is great’—is a Divine prayer. Be merciful to my sins—for they are few, or small, or easily to be apologized for—because ‘the serpent beguiled me,’ or because ‘the woman whom Thou gavest to be with me gave me of the fruit’—this is the prayer which defeats and contradicts itself—the prayer of the self-excuser, for whom Christ Himself died in vain.

‘Forgive’—the original word is, ‘Dismiss’—our trespasses. King Hezekiah expresses the same thought in strong figure, when he says, ‘Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.’

And the prophet Micah uses an equivalent metaphor—‘Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.’ Even such is the ‘remission,’ the ‘dismissal,’ the ‘sending away,’ which is asked—and therefore promised—in the Divine Prayer.

Forgive—as we forgive.

Solemn words. Take heed lest the prayer become imprecation. Take heed lest, ‘bringing thy gift to the altar’ without ‘being first reconciled to thy brother,’ thou thyself be imploring the retention of thine own sins, because thou hast not thyself ‘dismissed’ his. The ‘hundred pence’ are small, small to insignificance, in the face of the ‘ten thousand talents’—and sometimes we fancy that we recognize that insignificance, and would remit the debt if it were heavier. It is not worth


while, we say, bringing that trifle into God's presence—God forgive him, though I forgive not. God forgive me the great debt, though I forgive not my brother the little one.

Brethren! in the sight of God, in the affairs of the soul, there is neither great nor little. That unforgiven wrong, real or imaginary, lies like the nether millstone upon thy soul. The spirit of the unforgiving is incompatible with the state of the forgiven. Love is the region in which forgiveness works. Blessing and cursing dwell not together, nor can the love of God rest where the love of man is not. 'That your prayers be not hindered' is the motive for domestic peace—'if ye forgive not, neither can God forgive,' is the plea for washing away all unkindness ere we draw nigh to God's altar.

In this, as in all things, let us acknowledge, let



us take into our hearts, the love of God. It is not that He establishes harsh conditions as barriers between us and Him. 'I command thee this day,' the old Lawgiver said to Israel, 'for thy good.' Tell me, ye who have tried both states, which is the happier—the state of discord, or the state of peace? Was the effort unrewarded, was it unblessed, by which you, the injured, constrained the love of the injurer? Was it without even a present, a human, recompense, that you sought out him who had done the wrong, took all the blame upon yourself, and so sent him, and went yourself, loved and loving, to the throne of grace? These are Gospel struggles, Gospel victories—in making them duties, God has but bound us to our own peace and to our own happiness. In bidding us say, 'Forgive as we have forgiven,' He does but say,



in the middle of His revelation, 'En sue peace, and inherit a blessing.

'Forgiven.' Who shall say what comfort, what joy, what life, lies in that word? 'Forgiven,' here on earth—'forgiven' this night for the sins of this day. Yes, there is a transaction, real and significant, passing, day by day, in ten thousand times ten thousand homes, between sin-laden souls and the sin-dismissing God. These things are no peradventure—no matters of doubt, uncertainty, or vague hope. Wheresoever the sacrifice of Christ is pleaded out of a true heart, there is sin cancelled and grace restored. The one sweeping forgiveness may lie far in the past—yet is there day by day a forgiveness needed, and a forgiveness vouchsafed. 'He that hath bathed himself,' all over, once for all, in the ocean of Atonement, 'needeth not' afterward

‘ save to wash his feet ’—yet that partial washing he needs. and here it is provided for. ‘ When ye pray, say, Forgive us our sins ’—and He that hears in heaven His dwelling-place, when He hears, FORGIVES.

## VII.

‘AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT  
DELIVER US FROM EVIL.’

Matt. vi. 13.

HOW real is the Gospel! Though it discloses to us that which eye hath not seen, yet how perfectly does it adapt itself to our want, and deal with us as we are! In opening to us a new world—the very opposite, in many respects, of this present—it never affects to disparage the things that make up our life as we live it, or to represent as shadows or phantoms the experiences which throng us and press us in the highway of business, the contact of home, or the chamber of solitude.

The Lord's Prayer has lifted our thought on

high, and taught us that more than Angels' language in which we may commune with an Invisible Father. It has bidden us to school our hearts into a new estimate of things interesting and things important. It has made us recognize as existences plans and purposes and systems which have no place in the calculations of statesmen or the councils of kings. It has put upon our lips the definite mention of a Name, and a Kingdom, and a Will, of which men reck not, and a prayer concerning each—a hallowing, and a coming, and a doing—which it assumes to be desirable, and which it would educate us to desire.

When at last the Lord's Prayer, having first taught us our insignificance—having first strengthened us by the recollection of Another, whom to know is eternal life, whom to serve

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with all the heart is perfect freedom—suffers us to return to earth, and to remember its circumstances and its necessities—it does so with a simplicity, and a directness, and an unselfishness also, which speaks a Master's hand and a Divine inspiration. It sums up all want into three particulars, one concerned with the present, another with the past, and a third with the future—making each strong and ample, and adding to it that implication of promise which is 'the anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast.'

The third and last of these is our topic this evening. None could be more grave in its thoughts, or more impressive in its admonitions.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT

DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

The soul forgiven its trespasses must go back

into the world in which it has trespassed. Can it do so in a light or confident spirit? Who must not feel, as he rises from his knees, assured of God's forgiveness, that it would be a dreadful crime to go back to his sins—that, to speak as a man, it would be horrible ingratitude, and, to speak as a Christian, it would be frightful sacrilege?

And yet, there is the world, and our prayer has not altered it. There is the flesh, and our prayer has not altered it. There is the devil—waiting to devour—and our prayer leaves him as he was, alike in power and in malignity.

Is ours, then, but half a Gospel? Is there pardon for the having sinned, and no help, no safeguard, no fortress, against the sinning?


We call the Gospel real because it does take into view the realities of our situation. If the

Lord's Prayer had ended with forgiveness, I should have felt confident that it was mutilated. Christ would not leave it so. St. Luke leaves out the petition about the Will. Doubtless he felt it to be included in the Name and the Kingdom. St. Luke leaves out the 'Deliver us from evil.' Doubtless he felt that it was involved in the 'Lead us not into temptation.' St. Matthew and St. Luke both (according to the best authorities) omit the doxology—end with the petition before us. Doubtless that was an early, though a perfectly pure and reverent, addition by the Church, for purposes of worship, to the actual liturgy of Jesus Christ. But it would have been a *hiatus* absolutely unaccountable—and therefore it is not—if the prayer had ended with the past, and made no mention of the future. Christ does bid us, while we leave



the supply of the future, its bread temporal and spiritual, entirely in the hands of God, to make special prayer for the spiritual perils which must beset and waylay us while we are in this body.

For indeed they are real. No state of life, no age, no character, is free from them. In this, high and low, rich and poor, wise and ignorant, joyous and sorrowful, are alike and (in God's sight, we believe) equal. In all there is the hungry, craving, disconsolate self—the self of affection, and the self of passion, and the self of lusting. In all there is the surrounding, deafening, maddening world—with its lying vanities, its imperious edicts, its insidious wiles. In all there is the marvellous, mysterious, prowling tempter—taking advantage of every infirmity, and accusing afterwards before God those whom he has first seduced into disobedience. It is impossible to




overstate or to overcolour the risks and the jeopardies of life as we live it. O, if we were but bystanders, if we were but spectators, unconcerned, ourselves, in its perils and in its agonies, could we, could we, be indifferent? But we are not lookers on; we are actors, we are sufferers, on this stage of mystery. For ruin or for salvation, we are ourselves players. Not least they who occupy that supposed place of safety—life's middle ground between greatness and littleness, between wealth and poverty, between joy and misery—they too are actors—they too have their special snares of apathy and unconcern, of security and indifference—nay, in the sight of God and His holy Angels, there is no such spot, on this earth, as one neutral and contemplative—it is a world of war and battle, and WE, WE are in the thick of it.

But it is time that we should attempt to give some definiteness to the description before us, by dwelling upon the two characteristic terms, 'temptation,' and 'evil.'

Many difficulties are found here by the ingenuity of interpreters—but I trust that they will not much trouble those who desire nothing but direction.

I need scarcely say that the Greek has but one word for 'trial' and 'temptation.' The idea is the same. It is exploration. It is the idea of piercing or penetrating the outer shell and husk of a man, to discover what is within him. You know how ambiguous is the character of a human being, while he simply goes his way, does his business, mixes in society, and makes his little mark upon a street, a town, or a congregation. You do not know him—does he



know himself?—as he is in God's sight, as he is for eternity. At last something occurs. He is placed in circumstances which must be dealt with. Many have been 'explored' by an opportunity of advancing themselves by means not perfectly upright—by some possible secret venture with another's credit or another's property—by an opportunity of screening that which, if known, would be fatal—of covering up some fraud, of disguising some guilt, of which they dare not confront the exposure and the ruin. Many more, ten thousand in comparison with one, have been 'explored' by a suggestion of sinning. Some one has too much trusted them—they have won an affection which it is possible to abuse—they have gained a reputation which may be the opportunity of deception—they have to settle, on the instant, no man

seeing their motive, how this shall be. These are strong, glaring instances of the thing spoken of. Let us enlarge the field of observation. Every time that an evil thought comes to us, it is an 'exploration'—are we true? are we faithful? can we be trusted out of sight? If so, we shall expel the lighted missile ere it can explode. We shall say at once, 'How can I so much as think this great wickedness, and sin against God?' If not, we shall dally and parley with it—we shall go to the edge—we shall look over—we shall excuse ourselves—'It is but a thought—no one talks of doing it'—and we shall be found out, by that meditation of the wrong thing, as not true, not faithful thoroughly and all through. This is temptation. It is this which we pray God, here, not to 'lead us into.'

St. James says that God is as incapable of

tempting as He is of being tempted. The idea that God could lay a snare for us is blasphemy. That is the devil's work. Still, if we believe at all in God's oversight of our life—in other words, in His guiding and 'leading' hand—we must feel that there are times and (as it were) places of 'exploration,' to which we do come under His direction; circumstances of trial, opportunities (in other words) of choosing between good and evil, which we cannot avoid, which confront us without our seeking, and concerning which we must make enquiry of Him who has charge of our lives. 'God did tempt Abraham'—His Word scruples not at the saying—He brought upon him a great 'crisis'—what is 'crisis' but the Greek word for 'trial?'—which formed a decision as to his faith. If he was entirely faithful, he would act thus—if not, he

would act thus. God 'led him into temptation,' that He might bring out his faith as gold from the furnace. Was there no specimen, there, of God's dealing? Has God ceased thus to 'tempt,' thus to 'explore,' His people? Would it be in mercy, would it be in faithfulness, if He always refrained from 'trying?'

And yet, brethren, knowing what we are, may we not well pray that God, of His mercy, would spare us, if it please Him, from these terrible scrutinies? O, that parting with the first-born, with the child of joy and promise—with the treasure dearer than life, with the boon granted to prayer itself—who is ready for it, with the confiding thought, with the 'Not my will, but Thine, be done?'

Sometimes the 'exploration' comes in love—to reveal the thoroughness of the faith, the

absoluteness of the self-devotion. Sometimes it comes, rather, to show to the man what is in him of evil. Yes, we believe that even a fall, shameful, pitiable, hateful, may be better, for the everlasting soul, than a condition of mere self-ignorance, carelessness, and self-conceit. It was better for Peter, in the boundless eternity, that he denied Christ, than that he should have lived and died fancying himself upright. He was 'led into temptation'—and yet (mystery of grace) he was 'delivered from evil.' We read the inner history in St. Luke's Gospel. 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you'—hath 'begged' you all of God, as in old time he besought the 'life' of Job—'that he may sift you as wheat : but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not'—the very one whose faith failed most signally at the moment—'and when



thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.' 'Pray that ye enter not (that ye be not led) into temptation : ' and the reason—'the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.'

What interpreter need we of the Lord's Prayer but the Lord its Author and Giver? He bade the disciples, that awful night of the Agony, to pray against the temptation which He knew of and which He foresaw. He felt the mighty difference between one kind, one result, of 'exploration,' and another. He was farsighted to perceive the ultimate 'rising' in the temporary 'fall'—and though He foretold the threefold denial, He could yet bid Peter pray that he might not be tempted, and pray for him Himself, that his faith might not fail finally.

Which of us shall not pray to be spared, if it

be the will of God, form these fearful ordeals of exploration? If the flesh is weak where the spirit is ready, how shall it be with the weak flesh and the unready spirit? How sharp, how sudden, how fearful, may be the 'crisis' before any one of us! Who can judge, in the distance, what it may be near at hand? That possibility of which we had said, in cold blood, 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?'—it is come, it is upon us, and we are fallen! O the misery, the self-reproach, the remorse, the infinite difficulty, too, and uncertainty, of the rising! With what bitter tears shall we pray, next time, 'Lead us not into temptation!' No doctrinal or theoretical difficulties will check its utterance then. But, alas, the very prayer is weakened by the sinning—and, fast linked with the hope, vanishes the effort.

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The Divine Author seems to have interpreted at the same time also the other saying—‘Deliver us from evil.’ The original is ambiguous. It may be rendered, ‘from evil,’ or, ‘from the evil one.’ I think the latter is the more probable meaning. Considering our Lord’s frequent references to a personal tempter—considering the special instance just quoted, ‘Satan hath desired you . . . . but I have prayed for thee’—it seems natural to suppose that it is from ‘the wicked one’ that He here bids us pray for deliverance, rather than from the less definite, more abstract thing to which we give the impersonal name of ‘evil.’

There is much in reason, much in experience, to reconcile us to the unquestionable doctrine of Christ as to the existence, the restless and relentless activity, of an organized spiritual

power of evil, apostate first, and then living only to seduce and to destroy. Such a revelation throws light upon a multitude of facts which would otherwise seem to impugn the mercy and goodness of God Himself to His own. If there is in existence an adverse, an antagonistic power, carrying on war, in hearts and lives, against the great and blessed Redeemer who will have all men to be saved, it is at least conceivable that the wretchedness and the wickedness which is working such havoc may be traceable to an authorship altogether apart from God's, and destined to an absolute extermination when that war of the ages is brought to its catastrophe. Mysterious as all this is—mysterious as must ever be (whatever your hypothesis) the existence and the origin of evil—at least we are able thus to understand that evil is no part of us, that it

is (in a sense) external as well as hostile to us, that the influence under which we have fallen is one from which we may be set free, and that, if we will but boldly and manfully take God's side in the battle of this lifetime, we shall assuredly share God's victory when at last He shall have taken to Himself His great glory, and put all enemies under the feet of Him who hath taken it upon Him to deliver man.

‘Deliver us from the evil one.’ Put forth Thy Almighty power for my rescue in the unequal struggle with leagued and banded spirits of wickedness. The very air is peopled with them. By night and by day they find access. Every unguarded point in my armour is perceived and made advantage of. A wily and experienced foe watches my going out and my coming in, my lying down and my rising up. Terrible,


and yet most comforting, revelation! For if I can but be assured that this sin is not I myself, but the action upon me of temptation and a tempter, the worst sting is gone out of it. I am encouraged to betake myself to the One 'stronger than the strong man armed,' and to believe that, while I keep close to Him, while I 'abide inside' Him, while I exercise my privilege as His redeemed and His baptized, nothing can harm me—neither craft nor assault of the devil, neither the breath of seduction here, nor 'spirit-horde of wickedness in high places.' I may not indeed relax my watching—but while I watch I am safe. I may not look off from Christ—but looking to Christ I fear no evil. I may not, even for a moment, tread the forbidden ground or touch the accursed thing—but, keeping within the bounds of duty and conscience, of

love and devotion, I may rise and rest, I may work and enjoy—the Captain of my salvation has charge of me, and who can be against me?

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT  
DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

And who, brethren, can pray this prayer with a good conscience?

Not he who trifles with evil. Not he who 'runs' into danger. Not he who can tranquillize a false heart by praying for protection, and then thrust himself upon the place or the companionship or the meditation which he has a thousand times found to be the threshold and the vestibule of sinning. Not he, certainly, who here intercedes for his brother, 'Lead us . . . deliver us . . . ' and goes forth to weaken his decision for good, or to overbear and overpower it for evil. Brethren, the responsibilities of this prayer



are commensurate with its blessings. We cannot pray it, as we have all prayed it thrice this evening, without pledging ourselves to God's side in the great world-wide and 'age-long battle. Let us make it our '*Sacramentum*,' our military oath, to Jesus our Redeemer, to-night. Let us behold Him, as He stands there bound and bleeding before His earthly Judges—as He hangs there, between earth and heaven, pierced and thirsting, on the Cross of His shame and of His Atonement. Let us feel it impossible to deny Him who has so loved as to give Himself for us. Let the cry of our hearts this night be to Him, 'By Thine Agony and bloody sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion, by Thy precious Death and Burial, by Thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost—

*'Good Lord, deliver us.'*



‘In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment—

*‘Good Lord, deliver us.’*



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